REBOUND

The China-India Border

The origins of the disputed boundaries

ALASTAIR LAMB

CHATHAM HOUSE ESSAYS

CHATHAM HOUSE ESSAYS: 2

THE CHINA–INDIA BORDER

CHATHAM HOUSE ESSAYS

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The China–India Border

THE ORIGINS OF THE DISPUTED BOUNDARIES

BY

ALASTAIR LAMB

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For
Venice and Ian

Foreword

by The Rt Hon. Kenneth Younger

THE correct demarcation of the India–China border, which has been a matter of argument for decades, has become in the last few years, a major issue in international affairs.

The large-scale military operations which broke out in the autumn not only aroused immediate alarm throughout the world but also cast a shadow over the 1962 attempt to regulate inter-state relations in Asia on the basis of non-alignment and of the principles of coexistence hopefully adopted at the Bandung Conference of 1955.

The dispute has thus acquired significance far beyond the original territorial claims and is bound now to be powerfully influenced by such contemporary factors as the nature and ambitions of the Chinese Communist régime, the state of public opinion in both countries, and the current climate of international relations. Nevertheless the case has so far been argued by both sides largely on historical grounds, and the greater part of the highly complicated evidence dates from the period of British rule in India.

In the following pages Dr Lamb examines the story up to the transfer of power in India in 1947, on the basis of both published and unpublished material, including the British official records, which are available to scholars up to 1913. The historical evidence cannot any longer be considered as the sole criterion for settling the dispute, but its relevance to present and future attempts at reaching an agreement is not in doubt. While the Institute, in accordance with its invariable rule, refrains from endorsing

the author's opinions and conclusions, it presents Dr Lamb's study as a scholarly and disinterested contribution to the understanding of a problem which, until it is satisfactorily resolved, must be of increasing concern both to the governments involved and to the world at large.

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A. L.

Hertford,
March 1963

Abbreviations

Atlas	India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), *Atlas of the Northern Frontier of India.* 1961.
I.O.	India Office
Chinese Officials' Report *Indian Officials' Report*	India, MEA, *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question.* 1961. (The Chinese case is stated in the last 213 pages, the Indian case in the first 342 pages.)
JRCAS	*Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*
JRGS	*Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*
Peking Review	Refers to nos. 47 & 48, 30 November 1962.
White Paper I	India, MEA, *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged and Agreements signed between the Governments of India and China, 1954–9.* 1959.
White Paper II	—— *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China, September–November 1959,* &c. 1959.

I

The Nature of Sino-Indian Dispute

THE British first came into direct territorial contact with Tibet during the Gurkha War of 1814–16, when they annexed the Himalayan districts of Kumaon and Garwhal. Lying between the present western boundary of Nepal and the Sutlej river, these hill tracts had recently been occupied by the Gurkhas. With the defeat of the Gurkhas, the British also gave thought to the annexation of Nepal itself. But practical considerations deterred them. As Dr Buchanan-Hamilton, who advised Lord Hastings's Government on Himalayan matters, pointed out, a British occupation of Nepal would create an extremely long Sino-British border. He noted: 'a frontier of seven or eight hundred miles between two powerful nations holding each other in mutual contempt seems to point at anything but peace'.[1]

In recent years the Republic of India has likewise had to cope with the problem of a long common border with Chinese territory. In 1954, in the Sino-Indian agreement of 29 April relating to trade and other contacts between 'the Tibet Region of China' and India, the two signatories did not share Dr Buchanan-Hamilton's pessimism. Indeed, they expressed the belief that Sino-Indian relations over the common border could be conducted with 'mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit,

[1] See Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia* (1960), pp. 37–8.

and peaceful coexistence'.[2] The ink was scarcely dry on these admirable sentiments than there began an increasingly acrimonious exchange of notes, protests, letters, and memoranda on alleged violations by both sides of the Sino-Indian border. Of so little value have been the pious phrases of the *Panch Shila*, the five elements of peaceful coexistence enumerated in the 1954 agreement, that by November 1962 a massive Chinese army was on the march towards the Indian plains and the Indian Republic was suffering the worst military disaster of its short life, a debacle to be compared, perhaps, to the British retreat from Kabul in the winter of 1841–2.

How can we explain this change, this collapse of the Sino-Indian romance, which is and will increasingly be of such importance to the balance of power in Asia? The problem is without doubt a complex one. Involved in its solution are considerations arising from the increasing strain in Sino-Russian relations, and from Chinese jealousy of India's economic progress in recent years. Beneath these factors of far-reaching significance, however, lies a boundary dispute. While it can possibly be argued that the boundary dispute is not the sole cause, even the main cause, of the present state of Sino-Indian relations, yet there can be no denying that the boundary dispute has provided the raw material from which Chinese and Indian diplomats and soldiers have forged the present crisis. Without the boundary dispute, Chinese and Indians might well have ceased to be brothers, but they would have done so in a rather different way. Any improvement in the attitudes of Peking and New Delhi to each other, moreover, will almost certainly involve some settlement of the major points at issue in the boundary dispute. Any such settlement will involve modifications in the territorial claims of one side, if not both sides; and

[2] For text of this document see *White Paper I*, pp. 98–101.

before one can think about India or China surrendering disputed territory one should have a clear idea as to the reasons why the territory in question should in fact be disputed at all. This means, of course, that some attempt should be made to look at the dispute from the points of view of both sides. Even Chinese Communists may have strong feelings about giving up portions of what they have been taught to regard as their mother land; one should, before dismissing out of hand the Chinese case, as so many western journalists now tend to do, try to see the situation through Chinese, as well as Indian, spectacles.

Rather than attempt a detailed analysis of the factual content of the charges and countercharges which Peking and New Delhi have flung at each other for the last six years or so, a rather different method has been adopted here by which, it is hoped, some light may be shed on the essential nature of the boundary dispute *qua* boundary. The boundary which independent India now claims was inherited from British India, and it is unlikely that any present Indian statesman would argue that the legal alignment of the Sino-Indian border has been modified in any significant way since 15 August 1947. It is probable, therefore, that an examination of the boundary as it had become at the moment of the transfer of power may be useful.

Imperial borders

When the British ruled India before partition the British boundary in northern Kashmir, where British territory marched with that of Sinkiang (or Chinese Turkestan), extended for some 300 miles to the west of the Karakoram Pass. This stretch of boundary, from the Karakoram Pass to Afghanistan, the Chinese have refused to discuss with India since they are reluctant, not surprisingly, to mix the Sino-Indian boundary dispute with

the long-standing and frequently acrimonious Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir. Today, *de facto* if not *de jure*, the greater part of the boundary to the west of the Karakoram Pass is the concern of Pakistan. It is a boundary where the possibility of disputes with China has existed just as much as it does farther to the east. It is thus proposed to consider here also this sector, the Sino-Pakistani border now settled by an agreement between China and Pakistan, since its history is closely connected with that of the northern boundary of Ladakh.[3]

India, therefore, is not the only state with a common border with China; and much of the interest and historical significance of the present Sino-Indian boundary question lies in the way in which it has differed in its development from the boundary questions between China and her other neighbours. Since 1960 China has settled her long and complicated boundaries with Nepal and Burma; and in late 1962 and early 1963 she arrived at peaceful boundary agreements with Mongolia and Pakistan, at least in principle if not in the shape of final signed and ratified instruments.[4] The boundary between the eastern part of Sinkiang and Russia was delimited in 1884. The boundary between the Indian-protected state of Sikkim and Tibet was delimited in 1890, and subsequently not very successful attempts were made at joint demarcation: at all events, the Chinese at present seem prepared to accept the Sikkim–Tibet boundary as it stands. Thus only three stretches of what Owen Lattimore has termed the 'Inner Asian frontiers of China' remain to be delimited: the boundary between western Sinkiang and Russia, the boundary between Bhutan and Tibet, and the boundary between India and Sinkiang and Tibet. A survey of these

[3] See N. Ahmad, in *International Affairs* (1962).

[4] For a map of Chinese Central Asia showing the delimited and undefined boundaries, see *The Economist*, 5 Jan. 1963, p. 23.

other Chinese boundaries shows that China *can* make a peaceful boundary settlement with her neighbours, and can, as in the Sino-Burmese negotiations culminating in the treaty of January 1960, surrender claim to extensive tracts of territory. China can even, and again the Sino-Burmese case provides the example, accept sections of boundary which have already been laid down unilaterally by an imperialist Power.[5] Why, then, has the Sino-Indian boundary question become the cause of what is, in all but name, war? And will the Sino-Russian boundary in the Pamirs, as yet undelimited formally, also be the scene of bloodshed? These questions are well outside the scope of this little work; but the student of the Sino-Indian boundary should not overlook them.

The present Sino-Indian dispute, it is worth noting in conclusion, is the product of a situation which was not in many respects created by the present disputants. The boundary between India and Chinese Turkestan and Tibet was formed under régimes which no longer rule. The China of the Manchus and the Republic has gone from the mainland, and its forlorn remnant on Formosa is not likely in the foreseeable future to have a direct interest in Central Asian issues. The British have left India. The Sino-Indian border as it stands today, however, was very much the product of Manchu and Chinese Republican policy on the one hand, and of British policy on the other. The post-imperialist Indian Republic and the Chinese People's Republic are, in effect, trying to solve a problem which their imperialist predecessors found either insoluble or undesirable to solve. To a student of the history of European expansion in Asia their efforts are of absorbing interest. Frontier policy to the majority of Asian nationalist writers in the past was very much

[5] For an account of the Sino-Burmese boundary negotiations see Whittam, in *Pacific Affairs* (1961), and Woodman (1962).

the preserve of the colonialists. The 'great game' of the nineteenth century between Russia and England in Asia was a game, so it was often said, which did not affect the interests of the Indian people except in so far as it added to their burden of taxation. Now two non-imperialist powers are playing the 'great game' for all it is worth, and it is clear that the Indian people are profoundly affected by frontier matters. The present crisis, in fact, provides that which all scientists are said to desire, a control against which to check conclusions, a touchstone for an assessment of past imperialist frontier policy. One may well wonder whether the experience of the Sino-Indian boundary will be repeated, for example, in Africa, where many new nations are separated from each other by boundaries left to them by the former colonial powers.

For the details of the recent history of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute, and of the claims which had been advanced by both sides,[6] the reader should consult the extensive literature of the subject. Some representative titles are given in the Select Bibliography (p. 183). It is not my purpose to discuss in detail here the present Indian and Chinese claims: but, as points of reference for the 1947 standpoint, some brief account of them is required. The present dispute involves more than 2,000 miles of boundary. For convenience of discussion this has been divided up into three sectors, the Western, Middle, and Eastern Sectors. The Western Sector is the boundary between Kashmir and Sinkiang and Tibet. It starts at the Karakoram Pass in the extreme north of Kashmir, and extends to the Spiti–Tibet border just north of where the Sutlej cuts its way through the Himalayan range. The

[6] I have based the statements of claims in this section mainly on the *Indian Officials' Report* (for the Indian case) and *Chinese Officials' Report* (for the Chinese case). For good unofficial statements of the Indian case see Rao (1962); Shelvankar (1962); Bains (1962); Chakravarti (1961).

Middle Sector, much shorter in length, involves the boundary between Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh (in India) and Tibet. It runs along the crest of the Himalayas from the Sutlej to the Nepalese border. The Eastern Sector is that stretch of boundary in the Assam Himalayas between Bhutan and Burma.

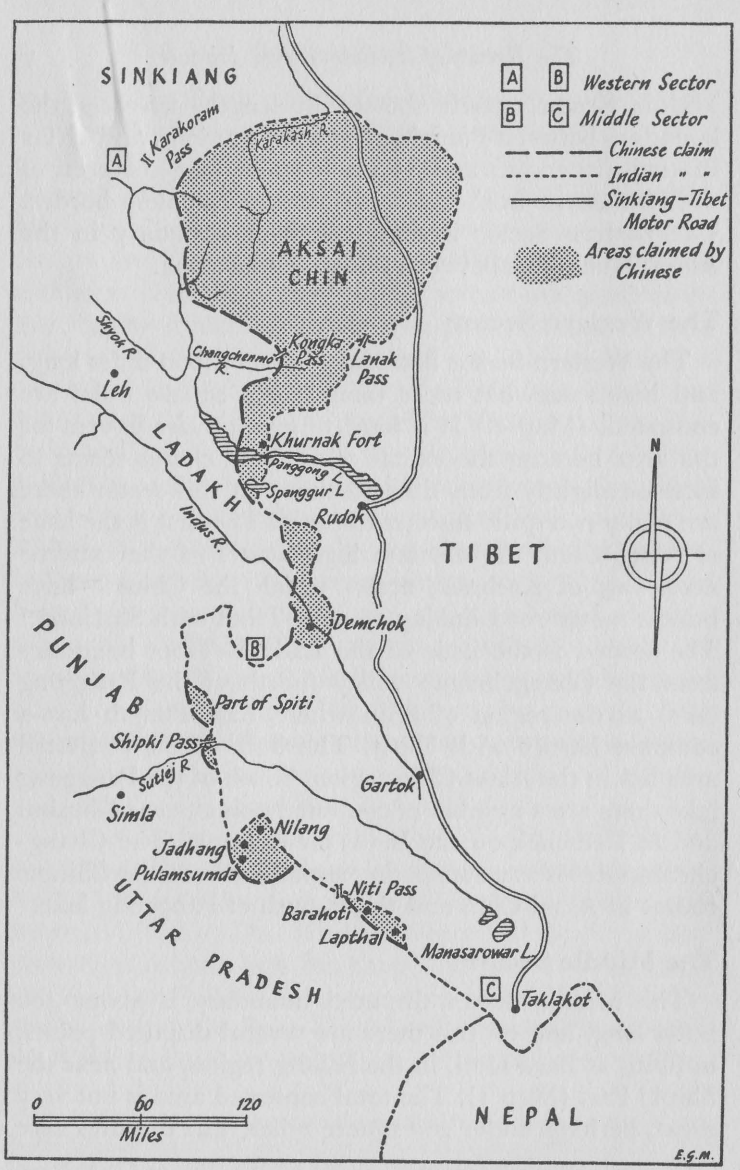
The Western Sector

The Western Sector boundary is over 1,000 miles long, and here somewhat more than 15,000 square miles are contested. (Map 1.) It is hard to give precise figures for the area because the extent of Chinese claims seems to increase slightly from time to time. In this sector there are really two quite distinct disputes. The first is the issue of Aksai Chin, the desolate high wastes of the extreme north-east of Kashmir, across which the Chinese have built a motor road linking western Tibet with Sinkiang.[7] The second is the issue of the Ladakh–Tibet boundary from the Changchenmo valley (north of the Panggong lake) to the region of Spiti where East Punjab has a common border with Tibet. The bulk of the contested area lies in the Aksai Chin region. South of the Panggong lake there are a number of contested points, near Chushul and at Demchok on the Indus for example. The Changchenmo serves as a connecting region between the Chinese claims in Aksai Chin and those south of Panggong lake.

The Middle Sector

The Middle Sector disputed boundary is about 400 miles long, and on this there are several disputed points, in Spiti, at Bara Hoti, in the Nilang region, and near the Shipki Pass (Map 1). The total contested area is not very great, perhaps under 200 square miles. The disputes here

[7] For some observations on this road, see M. W. Fisher and L. E. Rose, 'Ladakh and the Sino-Indian Border Crisis', *Asian Survey*, ii (1962).



MAP 1. THE PRESENT BOUNDARY DISPUTE, WESTERN AND MIDDLE SECTORS

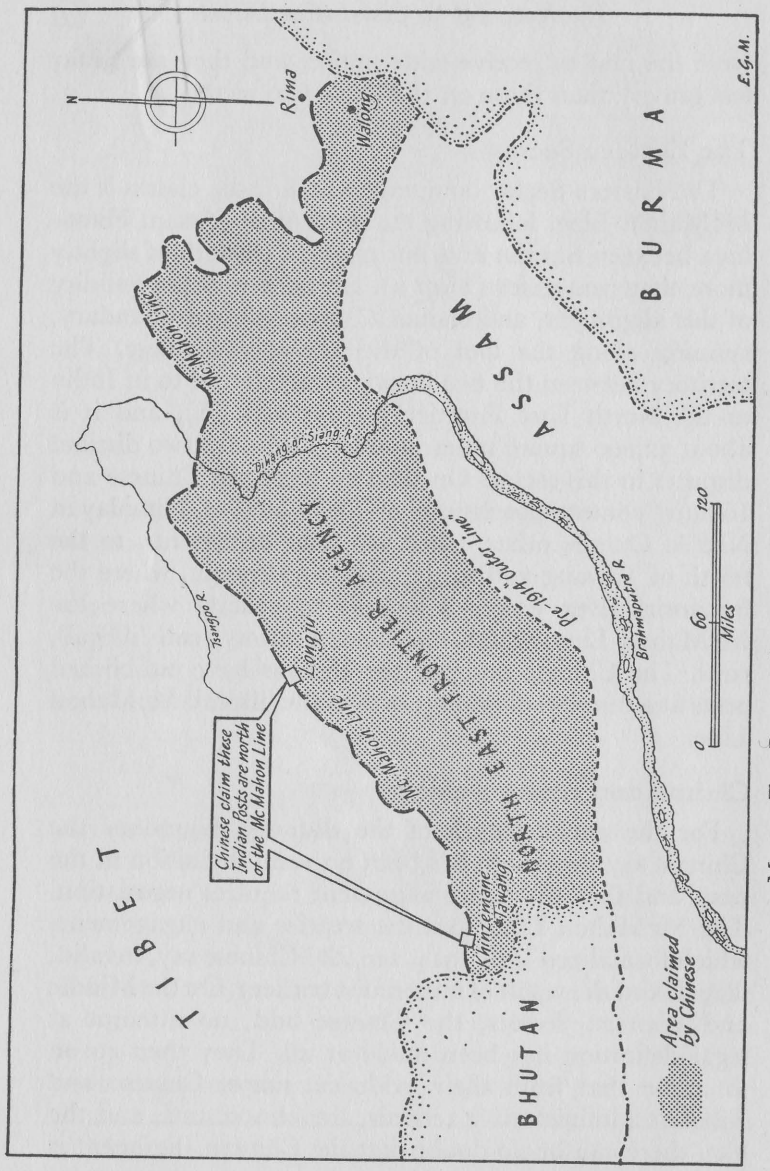
were the first to receive wide notice, and they are of far less gravity than those on the other two sectors.

The Eastern Sector

The Eastern Sector boundary which India claims is the McMahon Line, following the crest of the Assam Himalaya between Bhutan and Burma over a length of slightly more than 700 miles (Map 2). China denies the validity of this alignment, and claims a quite different boundary, running along the foot of the Himalayan range. The territory between the two lines is now referred to in India as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), and it is about 32,000 square miles in area. There are two distinct disputes in this sector. On the one hand the Chinese and Indians contest possessions of the whole of Himalayan NEFA. On the other, there are some arguments, to the north of Tawang and in the region of Longju, where the Subansiri river enters Tibet, as to exactly where the McMahon Line, which the Chinese always call 'illegal', runs. The Chinese say that the Indians have established posts at a number of points north of the 'illegal' McMahon Line.

Claims and counter-claims

For the entire length of the disputed boundary the Chinese say that there has been no valid definition in the past, and that the entire alignment requires negotiation. The McMahon Line, and the treaties and engagements which formalized it in 1914, are, the Chinese say, invalid, illegal, and the result of imperialist trickery. On the Middle and Western Sectors, the Chinese add, no attempt at legal definition has been made at all. They then go on to argue that from their evidence, maps, Chinese and Tibetan administrative records, travel accounts, and the like, there can be no doubt that the Chinese alignment is



Map 2. The Present Boundary Dispute, Eastern Sector

the correct one, a contention which the Indian side, not surprisingly, has rejected.

The Indian side has maintained that the entire length of the disputed Sino-Indian boundary has been defined by treaty, tradition, and administrative usage. The Western Sector, they state, was defined by a Tibet–Ladakh agreement of 1684, confirmed by a Dogra–Ladakh engagement of 1842 which, in turn, was affirmed by an Anglo-Chinese exchange of notes in 1846–7. Indian possession of Aksai Chin was further confirmed by a British note to the Chinese Government in 1899. The Middle Sector, while not the subject of any major treaty, had yet been under the administration of states on the Indian side of the boundary since at least the seventeenth century. The Eastern Sector, say the Indians, was defined by a valid exchange of notes between British India and Tibet on 24–25 March 1914. These were confirmed in the Simla Convention, initialed by a Chinese plenipotentiary on 27 April 1914. The resultant McMahon Line, named after the chief British delegate to the Simla Conference of 1913–14, was no new boundary, however. It merely formalized an alignment up to which Indian rulers had been administering as far back as the centuries before the Christian era when were compiled the great Sanskrit epics such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. British officials had before 1914 been in the habit of travelling up to the McMahon Line, and by means of a series of treaties and the payment of subsidies they had brought the tribes of what is now NEFA under effective British rule long before McMahon thought of his line. By so doing the British were merely following the footsteps of their predecessors in Assam, the Ahom dynasty, which in turn was carrying out a practice already well established by such medieval Indian dynasties as the Pala of Bengal.

In these arguments we may not, perhaps, be able to

detect the realities of the Sino-Indian conflict, which is certainly concerned with more than such points of antiquarian interest as the precise limits of Pala rule. The claims and counter-claims, however, supply the language of the dispute, whatever its real substance may be. It is clearly of importance to attempt to decipher this language; and here a historical approach suggests itself. The dispute has been largely conducted on the basis of historical material. What happened in 1914 at the Simla Conference? What was the true story of the Dogra–Tibet engagement of 1842? These questions, and a large number like them, have filled hundreds of pages of Indian and Chinese official publications. One method of considering such material would be to provide a kind of commentary on the existing texts, the Chinese and Indian statements of claim. However, this method has its disadvantages. As historians, the Chinese representatives to the Sino-Indian talks of 1960 and early 1961, when most of these issues were presented, have not lived up to the high traditions of classical Chinese historiography. We are given yet another example of the truism that the greatest barrier to writing good history is a dominating theory of history. The Indians, on the other hand, have used their history in a way which Western scholars can understand and relish; but they have done so at great length. To 245 items of evidence, mainly of historical nature, which the Chinese produced in 1960–1, the Indians replied with no less than 630 items.[8] A commentary would, therefore, have to devote far more space to the Indian than to the Chinese argument, and if it were at all critical, it would seem, unfairly, to be more critical of India than China. It would also have to devote itself to the tedious, and profitless, business of rebutting Marxist nonsense. For

[8] A summary of the Indian arguments is available in MEA, *Concluding Chapter of the Report of the Indian Officials on the Boundary Question* (1961).

example: the Chinese have said that one of the major causes of the present crisis in Sino-Indian relations has been Prime Minister Nehru's co-operation with the capitalist Tata family in creating a war scare so as to increase arms production, and hence, to augment Tata profits. This sort of thing, at least outside Communist countries, does not really need refuting.

Rather than undertake a point-by-point consideration of the mass of evidence about the history and nature of the Sino-Indian border which has been produced by the two disputants, the following plan has been adopted. Three sections are devoted to a discussion of the general background of the Sino-Indian boundary, its people, its early history, its geography, and the kind of evidence which we have to deal with when attempting to decide on its correct alignment. Three sections describe the history of the boundary in the Western Sector from early in the nineteenth century, when the British first became concerned with this part of the world, until the end of British rule in 1947. Two sections deal with the origins of the McMahon Line boundary, and with British administration in the hill tracts south of that boundary up to 1947. In the final section, by way of a summary, there is a brief analysis of the actual state of British administration along the Chinese and Tibetan border in 1947, with some observations as to possible modifications in the boundary alignment.

2

Frontiers and Peoples

Frontiers and boundaries

Sir Henry McMahon (of whom more will be heard later), in an address to the Royal Society of Arts in 1935, made an interesting distinction between the terms 'frontier' and 'boundary'.[1] A frontier, he said, meant a wide tract of border land which, perhaps by virtue of its ruggedness or other difficulty, served as a buffer between two states. Thus the Western Desert provides a frontier, in McMahon's sense, between Egypt and Libya. A boundary, he continued, was a clearly defined line, expressed either as a verbal description ('delimited') or as a series of physical marks on the ground ('demarcated'). A frontier, in other words, McMahon saw as an approximation, more or less a question expecting the answer 'in roughly such and such a region'; while a boundary was a positive and precise statement of the limits of sovereignty.

The mountain ranges, the Himalaya and the Karakoram, which separate the Indian subcontinent from Chinese Central Asia, make an excellent frontier in McMahon's sense. They are not, however, such ideal regions for boundary making. Much of the present boundary dispute springs from this fact. From the earliest times of which we have any knowledge these mountains have separated north from south. Principalities and powers may have ebbed and flowed across the passes between the Punjab and Afghanistan, the famous North West Frontier,

[1] *J. Rl Soc. Arts* (1935–6), p. 3; see also generally Curzon (1907).

but the northern mountain barrier has had a fairly uneventful history. Rulers in the Indian plains, with, inevitably, a few exceptions like one of the fourteenth-century Delhi Sultans, have not undertaken conquest across the Himalaya or Karakoram; nor have major migrations or invasions come down into the valleys of the Indus and the Ganges over these ranges. There is thus no doubt as to where the northern 'frontier' of India should be. But *exactly* where does India stop and non-India begin? This is quite another question.

While the mountain ranges of the north have been on the whole strong shields against major invasions and migrations, they have not been anything like so effective in preventing the passage of small groups to and fro within the mountain area itself. Pressures from the north have in places met pressures from the south, and populations and sovereignties have mingled. There have been migrations from one part of the mountain barrier to another. Patterns of grazing have changed, economic factors have caused foothill dwellers to move higher up the slope. The result, politically, has been in many areas of the mountain barrier to create what one British observer described in 1842 as 'a multiplicity of relations and a diversion of allegiance'.[2] Drawing a line between any two clear sovereignties is here no easy task. It is certain, in any event, that an arbitrary formula for demarcation, as for instance the claim that the true boundary follows such and such a watershed, will usually clash with existing relationships among people who have never seen a map and who do not know what a watershed is.

Hunza

At the extreme western end of the Karakoram range, where Pakistan now meets China, there is an excellent

[2] J. D. Cunningham, 3 Aug. 1842, quoted in Lamb (1960), p. 72.

watershed line separating the waters of the Indus system from those of the Tarim Basin in Sinkiang. From Afghan Wakhan to the Karakoram Pass by way of the Mintaka, Shimshal, and Mustagh Passes this line has for a half century at least been the effective border; but it is by no means the boundary line claimed by tradition. The people who occupy the valleys immediately to the south of this watershed, the Kanjuts of Hunza and Nagar, used to be famous bandits. They raided far into Chinese Turkestan, robbing caravans and taking captives for sale into slavery. As a result, the Chinese authorities deemed it wise to enter into some relationship with the Kanjut chiefs in the hope of limiting, if not stopping the raids completely. Thus by the early 1890s, when British rule was finally established over Hunza and Nagar, the Chinese had come to look on Hunza as a tributary state, and the rulers of Hunza had acquired in exchange what they regarded as valuable property rights north of the watershed in the upper valleys of the Raskam river system and in the grazing land of the Taghdumbash Pamir (or Sarikol). In fifty years the British failed to find a completely satisfactory solution to the problem of the status of Hunza[3] (Map 8).

The watershed line along the present Sino-Pakistan border is unique in Himalayan and Karakoram geography in that it actually indicates the summit of a dividing wall between two low-lying and relatively densely populated districts, the Punjab and Western Sinkiang. Farther to the east India's northern mountain barrier ceases to mark such a clear divide because it becomes not so much a wall as the crumbling edge of a high platform. The Tibetan plateau sits on top of this series of ranges, and the Indian plains lie at the base. Rivers flow from the plateau down

[3] This question has given rise to an extensive literature. See, e.g., Schomberg (1935) and in *JRCAS* (1951), pp. 73–81.

to the plain below in a number of cases cutting right through the crests of the frontier ranges. Thus the Indus and the Sutlej both have their sources far within the Tibetan territory; while Tibet's largest river, the Tsangpo, after flowing eastward for some 1,000 miles along the northern side of the Himalayas, suddenly makes an abrupt southward turn into Assam where it becomes the great Brahmaputra river. No less than six major rivers, the Indus, Sutlej, Nyamjang, Subansiri, Brahmaputra, and Lohit, and several minor streams, cut through the Indian northern frontier; and the exact point where the boundary crosses these rivers has been a subject of much dispute.

Peoples of the Tibetan plateau

The much discussed 'watershed' boundary, in fact, is less concerned with the outlines of river systems (or there would have been good arguments for including the entire Indus–Sutlej–Tsangpo system within India) than with attempting to find a practical definition for the edges of the Tibetan plateau. But the Tibetan plateau is a region with its own peculiar climate and populations, and its confines are by no means limited to the political boundaries of the Tibetan state. A glance at a good physical map of the Ladakh region will show that here India has extended her direct political influence on to the Tibetan plateau itself. The disputed area of Aksai Chin is part of a geographical feature which extends eastwards for thousands of miles of desolate wasteland, occupied only by scattered nomad groups. Indeed, the term Aksai Chin refers to a far wider area than the portion of Ladakh at present disputed: strictly, the disputed Aksai Chin should be called West Aksai Chin. The eastern boundary of Ladakh is not a sharp line between plateau and plain; it is an attempt to separate one section of the plateau from another. In the process the political boundaries have often

failed to coincide with ethnic boundaries. With the exception of the extreme west of Ladakh where are people who, though of Tibetan stock, have become converted to Islam (i.e. the Baltis), all along the edge of the plateau from the Karakoram Pass to Assam are found people who are not only Tibetan in racial type but also share many of the characteristic features of Tibetan culture, religion, and language. The people of Ladakh and Spiti, for example, are Tibetan in all but sovereignty.

Along the crest of the Himalayas in the Middle Sector there are pockets of Tibetans who in the process of boundary making since the nineteenth century have found themselves cut off from the bulk of their brethren, or have been separated from their habitual grazing land by the watershed line, or have discovered that new barriers intervene along old trade routes. Farther east, in Nepal, there are peoples of Tibetan ethnic type quite distinct from the Gurkha families with their claimed Rajput ancestry who conquered the country in the late eighteenth century. In Sikkim the ruling family has for centuries married in Tibet and held estates and lived there. The British, after they took Sikkim under their protection in 1861, experienced considerable difficulty in persuading its ruler to come to Sikkim at all. Other races in Sikkim, such as the Lepchas, while distinct from the Tibetans still must be classified as being members of the Tibetan family. They are far closer in language and culture to Tibet than they are to Bengal. East of Sikkim lies Bhutan, 18,000 square miles of hill country with an indigenous population similarly very close to that of Tibet in its culture and its ethnic type. The Bhutanese occupy an area stretching from the highest ranges along the summit of the Himalayas down to the edge of the Brahmaputra valley.

East of Bhutan lies the Tawang Tract, which the

Tibetans call Mönyul.[4] The inhabitants of this region, the Mönbas, are easily distinguished from the Tibetans to the north. They closely resemble the people in eastern Bhutan. Like the Bhutanese, however, the Mönbas are far closer to Tibet in culture and ethnic type than they are to any of the populations in the Indian plains. Their language contains a large proportion of Tibetan words, and their religion is basically Tibetan. Politically, until 1914 Mönyul was Tibetan (though the exact nature of Tibetan control here is somewhat controversial and will be discussed in detail later on). The Mönbas, like the Bhutanese, occupy territory from the crest of the Himalayan range almost down to the plains.

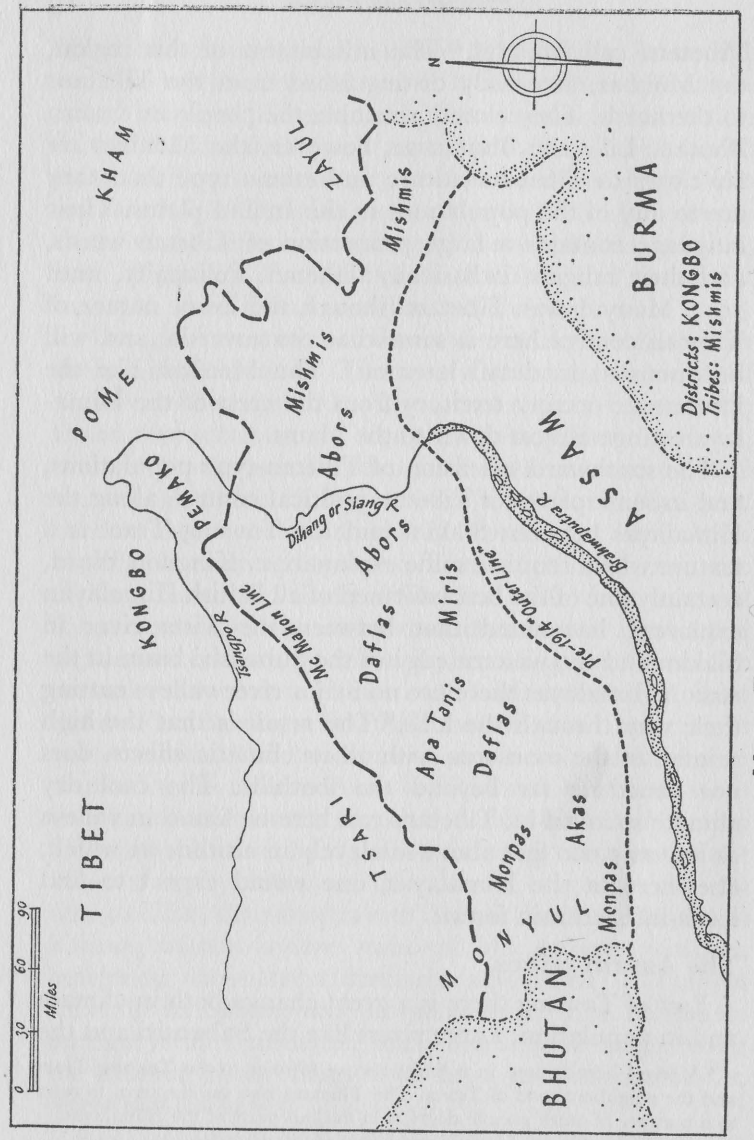
The southward extension of Tibetan-type populations, and in some places of Tibetan political control, along the Himalayas between Sikkim and the Tawang Tract is a feature which requires some explanation. Kingdon Ward, certainly one of the best informed of all British Himalayan explorers, has noted that between the Tista river in Sikkim and the western edge of the Subansiri basin in the Assam Himalayas there are no major river valleys cutting their way through the hills.[5] The result is that the high rainfall of the monsoon, with all its climatic effects, does not penetrate far beyond the foothills. The cool dry climate so loved by Tibetans can here be found in valleys as low as 5,000 feet above sea level, an altitude at which, elsewhere in the Himalayas, one would expect to find leech-infested rain forest.

The Assam tribes

East of Tawang there is a great change both in climate and in population. Large rivers like the Subansiri and the

[4] Mönyul here is used in a limited sense to refer to the Tawang Tract and the neighbourhood of Tsöna. The Tibetans also use the term to refer to a number of other remote districts in various parts of the Himalayas.

[5] *JRCAS* (1938), pp. 610–11, and Kingdon Ward (1941).



Map 3. Tribes of the Assam Himalaya

Brahmaputra and its tributaries open up the hills to the force of the monsoon. Along the river valleys live the aboriginal, or non-Buddhist, hill peoples, the Aka, Dafla, Miri, Abor, and Mishmi groups (Map 3). Ethnically, these tribes, now administered by India in the NEFA, are Mongoloid,[6] and are thus far closer to Tibetans and Chinese than to the Indian plainsmen. They speak languages of the Tibeto-Burman family. Their cultures are in many instances far from primitive; the agricultural methods of the Apa Tani of the Subansiri region, for example, are in many respects remarkably efficient. They possess no written records, and in this fact perhaps lies the justification for the appellation 'aboriginal'. For mainly administrative reasons these tribes of the Assam Himalaya have been divided into the five major groups named above—the names seem to be of Assamese origin, and are not generally used by the tribes themselves—but in practice their structure is far more complex, and the British classification, with its implication of the existence of five distinct tribal groups, is perhaps just as misleading as the Tibetan method, in which all the tribes are lumped together as *Loba*. In fact, though our present knowledge of these people is far from satisfactory, it would seem that the tribes, perhaps divisible into five or so major cultural groups, consist of a very large number of small societies. When the Assam hill tribes were first studied in the nineteenth century there was a tendency to assign to them segments of hill territory extending from the plains to the crest of the range. Subsequently, and particularly in the period 1911–14, it was discovered that within these segments there existed some kind of horizontal stratification. Divisions and barriers could be noticed between the tribes near the plains and those higher up in the hills; so much so that in most cases the plains-side tribes had never

[6] Majumdar (1961), p. 462.

been right up to the crest of the range or ever met people from that remote part of the world. They knew that Tibet and the high peaks existed, but their knowledge was derived at third or fourth hand. Only on the Lohit among the Mishmis is to be found any history of significant tribal movement all the way from the plains to Tibet.

It would be an over-simplification, but perhaps a useful one, to compare the tribal areas of the Assam Himalaya to a three-layered cake. The lowest layer represents tribes in direct contact with the Assam plains. The top layer is the tribes in direct contact with Tibetans. In the middle layer can be found tribes who are shut out by their neighbours from all direct contact with civilization.[7] Some indirect contact with either Tibet or Assam all the tribes had to have since, as Fürer-Haimendorf has pointed out, there is no salt to be found in this part of the Himalaya. The quest for salt meant trade with Tibet or Assam, and Fürer-Haimendorf has suggested the existence of a quite new kind of watershed, the 'salt divide', separating those who trade north for salt from those who trade south for this commodity.[8]

Population movements

There is a temptation, when considering Tibet and its surroundings—places where anachronisms abound—to think that what is found now has always been. This, of course, is not the case. Populations have moved along the Tibetan border just as they have elsewhere, and history has been made. The Indian side, during the 1960 discussions with China, advanced the thesis that traditional boundaries do not change: 'such boundaries', they noted, 'do not naturally change and if they change, they become

[7] This picture, of course, represents the tribal areas before the anthropologists had begun their intensified work in the 1940s.

[8] Fürer-Haimendorf (1947) and (1955).

artificial boundaries'.[9] The facts, however, are against this argument. Take, for example, the case of the extreme northern section of the Dibong river, to the east of the region where the Brahmaputra cuts its way through the main Himalayan range. Here is the home of a group of tribesmen classified as Mishmis. Here also, early in the twentieth century, came Tibetan immigrants. When this region was first accurately described, by F. M. Bailey in 1913, the Tibetans and the Mishmis were more or less at war with each other.[10] Had the process of Tibetan immigration gone on, however, the Mishmis would eventually have had to give way to the Tibetan agriculturalists, and a Tibetan society would have replaced an aboriginal one. These Tibetan settlers would inevitably have come under the protection and influence of the nearest Tibetan authorities to the north. The net result would have been an advance south of the Tibetan 'traditional' frontier. In this case, thanks to the perception of F. M. Bailey, we have a picture of a process of frontier change actually at work—though it must be admitted that in 1913 the Mishmis were tending to get the better of the Tibetans in this particular instance, and eventually wiped them out. There is evidence for similar migrations into the Himalayan valleys of Tibetan or Bhutanese groups over the last century; and no doubt the process goes back to the dawn of human history.

It is not only from the north that the impetus for population changes in the Himalayas has originated. Over the last 200 years major changes in the nature of the hill populations originating from the Indian side can be quite clearly seen. Ever since the second half of the eighteenth century, for example, when the Hindu Gurkha clan overran Nepal, there has been a constant Nepalese migration into the neighbouring hill states, Sikkim and

[9] *Indian Officials' Report*, p. 286. [10] Bailey (1914), p. 3.

Bhutan. At present of the 165,000 inhabitants of Sikkim, 100,000 are of Nepalese origin, and the proportion of Nepalese in Bhutan is similar.[11] This large Nepalese element has come about almost entirely within the last century, and it has certainly resulted in some pressure on the Bhutanese to settle new hill areas to the east.

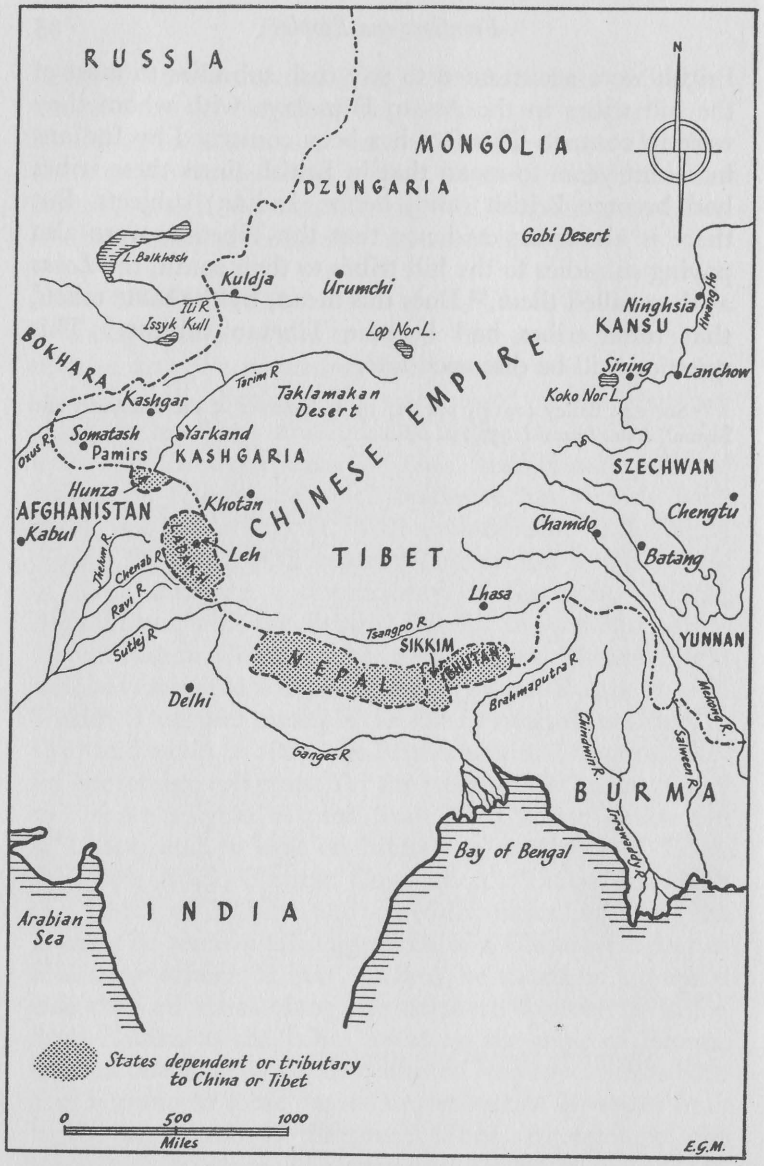
Dual relationships

Enough has been said to suggest that no simple formula such as that of a watershed-line boundary will determine with absolute accuracy the 'traditional' ethnic boundary along the northern mountains of India and Pakistan. Nor is it easy to determine the true 'traditional' political boundary. Hunza, to which reference has already been made, is a good example. With a relationship with China, during the nineteenth century Hunza also found herself in some measure a dependency of Kashmir, Chitral, Afghanistan, and the British. But for the prompt action of the Indian Government in the 1890s, Hunza might well have become a dependency of Tsarist Russia as well. Sikkim is another example. In the nineteenth century, in 1817 and again in 1861, the British assumed responsibility for her foreign relations. Yet the ruler of Sikkim continued to receive insignia of rank from the Chinese authorities in Lhasa, and to look on himself as a subject of Tibet. Even the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, in which the status of Sikkim was carefully described, did not manage to remove all suggestions of a Chinese interest in Sikkimese affairs. It may, in fact, be stated as a general rule that all states along the northern frontier of India, from Hunza to the tribal areas on the edge of Burma, have at one time or another entered into agreements with and become to some extent dependencies of, states both to the north and to the south. Thus, for example, the

[11] Patterson, in *China Quarterly* (1962).

British were accustomed to pay cash subsidies to most of the hill tribes in the Assam Himalaya with whom they were in contact. This fact has been construed by Indians in recent years to mean that in British times these tribes had become British (and, hence, Indian) subjects. But there is abundant evidence that the Tibetans were also paying subsidies to the hill tribes to their south, the *Lobas* as they called them.[12] Does this mean, by the same token, that these tribes had become Tibetan subjects? This question will be discussed later.

[12] See e.g. Bailey (1914), pp. 11, 19 & 'Sources of the Subansiri and Siyom', *Him. Journal* (1937), p. 146.



Map 4. Chinese Central Asia in 1792

3

China, Sinkiang, Tibet, and the Himalayan States in History

The Chinese have a highly developed sense of history. Every educated Chinese knows that his country has always been extremely vulnerable to invasion by nomadic peoples from Central Asia. He also knows that the defensive policy of the Great Wall, China's ancient anticipation of the Maginot Line, has rarely been successful; and that the great periods of Chinese power have been periods when Chinese rule extended far beyond the limits of the Wall. An aggressive policy and Chinese security have been closely related to each other in the past. There can be no surprise that the present Chinese régime, for all its Marxist doctrines, an heir to the Han and the T'ang dynasties, should have placed such emphasis on the control of Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. Today, of course, to traditional motives has been added a fresh and pressing problem. The increase in China's population has brought about a need for *lebensraum* so urgent that no Chinese Government, Communist or Nationalist, could be expected to overlook the potentialities of Central Asia's relative emptiness.

The Manchu tributary system

The present Chinese position in Central Asia can be traced back to Manchu conquests in the eighteenth century. The events which led the Emperor K'ang Hsi

(1661–1722) to undertake the domination of Tibet early in that century are extremely complicated, and for their elucidation the reader should consult H. E. Richardson's admirable book.[1] Essentially, K'ang Hsi was interested less in Tibet as a territory than as the home of the Tibetan Buddhist Church which had such influence over the tribes of Mongolia. His Tibetan intervention in 1718–20 took the shape of rescuing the Dalai Lama from the domination of Dzungar tribesmen who had invaded Tibet from their home in Eastern Turkestan. In 1720 Manchu forces escorted the Dalai Lama back to his capital at Lhasa. From that moment until 1912 Chinese control in Tibet was exercised by Chinese representatives supervising government by Tibetan authorities. There were crises in 1727–8, 1749–51, and 1792–3, as a result of which the details of this supervision were modified; but until the beginning of the twentieth century the Chinese made no attempt to carry on the direct administration of Tibet. So long as the spiritual apparatus of the Tibetan Church was on their side, they were content.

It is necessary, however, at this stage to clarify the implications of the term Tibet. At the Simla Conference of 1913–14, when the external boundaries of Tibet were under discussion, the Tibetans laid claim to a vast expanse of territory extending eastwards far into the Chinese province of Szechuan. In fact, the rule of Lhasa was then effectively confined to the country to the west of the Mekong–Yangtze divide, and to the east of this line there existed a number of Tibetan states under Chinese suzerainty which were not governed by the representatives of the Dalai Lama or his Regent.[2] Even to the west of this line there were regions where the Lhasa writ did not

[1] Richardson (1962), pp. 43–60; see also Petech (1950).

[2] The question of eastern Tibet is discussed most ably on the basis of personal experience in Teichman (1922).

run: there is reason to suppose, for example, that Pome, situated on the Tsangpo where it makes its great bend south towards Assam, was one such region.

Tibet, and the Chinese authorities at Lhasa, in the nineteenth century exercised some measure of influence over Sikkim and Bhutan; and, before the Dogra conquest in 1834, over Ladakh as well. These three Himalayan states, as also did Nepal in a somewhat different context, fell within the general sphere of the Manchu tributary system. They were in diplomatic relations with Lhasa. The Chinese Resident at Lhasa conferred Chinese rank on their rulers and acknowledged their embassies as tribute-bearing missions. In Chinese traditional diplomatic theory, of course, *all* foreign missions to the Chinese Emperor and his agents were tribute missions implying a degree of political subordination.[3] Lord Macartney, on his embassy to China of 1793–4, found that he was officially described by the Chinese as a barbarian bringing tribute.[4] Many of China's 'tributaries', however, did not consider that their relations with the Chinese, while advantageous, in fact in any significant way limited their sovereignty; and the formal description of Manchu diplomacy contains an element which can only be described as metaphysical. The rulers of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan during the course of the nineteenth century all entered into relations with the British without reference to their nominal Chinese or Tibetan suzerains; and only in the case of Sikkim did this dual allegiance lead to a major conflict of interests. The rulers of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan all possessed Chinese official rank; but this did not deter them from accepting, even seeking, British

[3] The best available account of the Manchu tributary system is that of Fairbank and Teng, in *Harvard J. of As. Studies* (1941).

[4] Cramner-Byng (1962), pp. 5–7; see also Fairbank, in *Far Eastern Q.* (1942).

decorations and membership in British orders of chivalry. The formal Chinese view of the tributary system can hardly be described as always a realistic one, though few Chinese officials have acknowledged this fact. The situation shown on Map 4 is, in respect to the Himalayan states, perhaps more theoretical than practical.

It would be unwise, however, to dismiss the implications of the Manchu tributary system, at least in relation to the Himalayan states, as of no more than theoretical interest. The rulers of those states, while most reluctant to permit their relations with China and Tibet to limit their freedom of action, yet felt that their membership of the Chinese imperial system gave them a certain prestige which they were reluctant to forego. They also found that the exchange of gifts with their suzerains could well be profitable, in that the overlord gave greater value than he received. On occasions, moreover, they found that the Chinese relationship was of use in diplomatic bargaining as a counter to pressures from British India. The Chinese relationship, finally, gave China, when she was powerful enough, an excuse for intervention, if only in symbolic terms, in the internal affairs of these states to the great alarm of the British. The Chinese attempted such intervention in the years immediately after the withdrawal of the Younghusband Mission from Lhasa in 1904, with important effects on the shape of British Himalayan policy.

In the early twentieth century Chinese policy in Tibet underwent a radical change. Already influenced by the pressure of an increasing population, alarmed at the expansion of Russian and British influence, and disturbed by the growing strength of the thirteenth Dalai Lama who, after China's defeat by Japan in 1895, began to dream of an independent Tibetan state, the Manchu dynasty in the last few years of its existence initiated a

policy of incorporating Tibet into the Chinese provincial structure and converting it into a field for Chinese settlement. It was this policy, the execution of which was entrusted to Chao Erh-feng, which really marks the beginning of the Sino-Indian boundary question in the Assam Himalaya. The present Chinese régime is, in fact, continuing the plans of Chao Erh-feng which were rendered abortive by the outbreak of the Chinese Revolution in 1911.

Chinese Turkestan

Just as the Dzungar invasion of Tibet in the early eighteenth century provided the occasion for K'ang Hsi's Tibetan policy, so in the middle of the century civil war in the Dzungar homeland (in the north-east of what later became known as Sinkiang) set the scene for the Emperor Ch'ien Lung's conquests in Turkestan. By 1759 Chinese troops had penetrated to Somatash in the Alichur Pamir (now part of the Soviet Union) and Chinese Turkestan had been created. The western portion of these conquests, sometimes known as Kashgaria, touches on the south the ranges of the Kunlun and Karakoram; and thus was born one sector of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute.[5]

Ch'ien Lung acquired for China in Turkestan more than 600,000 square miles of territory. He also brought under Chinese rule several million Moslems, of many racial groups but all apparently reluctant to accept the government of their new masters. From Kuldja in the Ili, in a new city which Ch'ien Lung built, initially the Chinese administered with considerable ability. They established law and order, their taxes were not excessive, and in many ways they left the local people to their own devices. Trade flourished. In the early nineteenth century,

[5] For the conquest of Sinkiang by the Manchus in the eighteenth century see Yuan, in *Central Asiatic J.* (1961) and Lattimore (1952), p. 46.

however, Chinese Turkestan became increasingly turbulent. A Moslem revival, connected perhaps with the Wahabi movement, stirred up discontent at Chinese rule which, as the Manchu dynasty declined, became less and less efficient. In Kashgaria unrest was fomented by agents of the neighbouring Khanate of Kokand, which considered it had claims over much of the territory which the Chinese had conquered. Moreover, many Kokandi subjects, originating from the city of Andijan, lived in the Kashgarian oases, and they provided a fertile ground for intrigues from across the frontier. In 1820 Kashgaria began to be the scene of endemic rebellion. When, in 1862, the Moslem Tungans of Kansu province rose against the Manchus, China was cut off from its Turkestan possessions, and the whole region fell into chaos. In Kashgaria this situation was the opportunity for a Kokandi adventurer, Yakub Bey, to create a kingdom for himself. Between 1865 and 1877 the whole of Kashgaria, and hence the whole of Chinese Turkestan bordering on British India, was free of all Chinese authority. Many observers, both Russians and British, thought that this situation would be permanent.

The Chinese, however, refused to accept defeat. Or rather, one Chinese soldier, Tso Tsung-t'ang, who had played a prominent part in the overthrow of the Taiping rebels, refused to accept the conclusion of some of the leading Chinese officials, notably Li Hung-chang, that Turkestan had gone and was not worth the trouble of retaking. With almost incredible energy and determination Tso Tsung-t'ang raised, financed, and trained armies for the Turkestan campaign. Systematically he restored order in Kansu, then along the eastern and north-eastern edges of the Tarim basin, and finally in Kashgaria. In December 1877, the adventurer Yakub Bey having meanwhile committed suicide, Chinese troops entered Kashgar.

Tso then proceeded to reorganize the reconquered territories with the result that in 1883 the New Dominion, Sinkiang, was proclaimed as a Chinese province.[6]

Kashmir

During the period of the loss of Chinese power in Turkestan the Russians undertook their lightning advance into the Khanates of Central Asia. A year before the Chinese retook Kashgar the Russians had incorporated the neighbouring state of Kokand into Russia as the province of Ferghana. While the Chinese were still struggling with the organization of their new Sinkiang province, the Russians began to push towards the Pamirs; and this, in turn, resulted in an increased British interest in the northern passes of Kashmir. Out of these three advances, of China, Russia, and Britain, emerged the Karakoram boundary of British India, a portion of which India has inherited in her Western Sector. This boundary is a direct product of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

As their means of countering the Russian threat to the Karakoram frontier the British, in the late nineteenth century, made full use of the state of Kashmir. We must, therefore, consider briefly the history of this strange political entity.

Kashmir, as we know it today, was the creation of one man, Gulab Singh, the Dogra ruler of Jammu. As Lord Birdwood puts it:

> Gulab Singh, more than any single man, was responsible for the delimitation of a line on the map of Central Asia which on political considerations enclosed a completely artificial area, a geographical monstrosity which then assumed the name of the land of the Jhelum Valley, Kashmir.[7]

[6] For an admirable account of the life of Tso Tsung-t'ang and the reconquest of Chinese Turkestan, see Bales (1937).

[7] Birdwood (1956), p. 25.

In 1819–20 Gulab Singh helped the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore in its conquest of Kashmir in the face of Afghan opposition. As a reward he was made by the Sikhs the ruler of the state of Jammu. From this base in 1834 he proceeded to conquer Ladakh. In 1840 he took Baltistan. Between 1841 and 1842 he made a disastrous attempt to take over western Tibet, a venture which produced a treaty of some importance to the Sino-Indian boundary question, and of which more later. In 1846, as a reward for his timely desertion of his Sikh overlords during the first Sikh War, the British made over to him the former Sikh possession of Kashmir, though he was unable to assume actual control without British military aid.[8] Gulab Singh died in 1858, but his successors shared his desire for territorial aggrandizement. With the outbreak of the rebellion in Chinese Turkestan, Kashmir sent troops to occupy land to the north of the Karakoram Pass in 1865. In the second half of the nineteenth century the state asserted its influence over Gilgit, Hunza, and Nagar, in each case with a great measure of British support.

Kashmir, since 1846, formed part of British India; but its rulers were no British puppets. Except for the period 1889–1905, when the British found it expedient to limit the Maharaja's powers, Kashmir was more of a British ally than a British possession. On occasions it could show an alarming independence in foreign policy; and the British were not always entirely happy about Kashmir's loyalty to the Queen-Empress.

Ladakh

Much of this British anxiety derived from Gulab Singh's conquest of Ladakh in 1834. Ladakh had till then been one of the major Himalayan states with a long history of relations with Tibet. In the seventeenth century

[8] Pearson (1948), pp. 71–2.

Ladakh, under a line of energetic if over-ambitious rulers, had built up what almost amounted to an empire and which included much of western Tibet. In 1683 the Ladakh empire collapsed under pressure from the Mongol clans then dominating Tibet. Only the timely intervention of the Moghul governor of Kashmir enabled the Ladakhis to escape complete subjugation.[9] Ladakh, as a result of this crisis, found itself on the one hand in a state of subordination to the Moghuls, and on the other, by the famous treaty of 1683—or 1684 according to the *Indian Officials' Report* (p. 51)—or 1687 according to Alexander Cunningham's *Ladak* (1854, p. 261), involved in a complex tributary relationship with Tibet. This last relationship, which conferred on Ladakh a valuable commercial monopoly of the export of shawl wool from western Tibet, Gulab Singh acquired along with Ladakh: and, as will be seen, in an attempt to exploit the possibilities of the 1683 treaty, he created a situation which convinced the British that some further definition of the Ladakh–Tibet boundary would be desirable. The major contribution of the creation of the Kashmir state to the present boundary question was to link the problems of the Ladakh–Tibet border to those arising from relationships along the southern edge of Chinese Turkestan.

The creation of the Kashmir state was the result of nineteenth-century historical evolution, a fact which must be remembered when we talk about 'traditional' boundaries. It was not only in Kashmir, moreover, that can be seen during the last century political changes at work along the edges of Tibet. Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan all evolved during this period in ways of direct significance to the present state of the boundary between India and China.

[9] For an admirable account of Ladakhi history during this period see Petech (1939). See also Z. Ahmad (1963), Francke (1907) and (1914–26).

Nepal

In the first part of the eighteenth century much of what is now known as Nepal was ruled by chiefs whose culture and mode of government was closely related to Tibet. In the 1760s the Hindu clan of the Gurkhas overran these states, and in the years that followed threatened to occupy the whole of the southern slopes of the Himalayan range. Gurkha expansion resulted, in 1788, in the first of a series of attacks on Tibetan territory which, in the winter of 1791–2, produced a violent Chinese intervention. Chinese troops reached the approaches to the Gurkha capital of Katmandu, and Nepal became a Chinese tributary state with the obligation to send a tribute mission to Peking once every five years.[10]

Gurkha expansion likewise brought about crises with the British to the south, culminating in the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814–16. British victory turned Nepal into a British-protected state, though at first a somewhat hostile one. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, after a political revolution had brought the Rana family to power in Katmandu as a dynasty of hereditary Prime Ministers, Nepal resolved upon a policy of close friendship with British India in return for a British guarantee of a very real measure of Nepalese independence. Nepal, for example, remained a country almost completely closed to European travel and exploration. From the days of the founder of the Rana régime, Sir Jang Bahadur, who remained loyal to the British during the Mutiny, Nepal has enjoyed a peculiar status. She has been closely linked with India because to the south she sent her most important export, mercenary soldiers, and from the south she has obtained the material for her own army, a source of national pride and, until

[10] See Cammann (1951) & Kunwar, in *Eng. Hist. R.* (1962).

recently, a means of employment for the numerous members of the Rana family. She has also been acutely aware of the north, conducting through a Lhasa representative her own relations with Tibet and endeavouring from time to time to secure boundary adjustments at Tibetan expense. Boundary issues were a factor in the Tibeto-Nepalese war of 1854–6.[11]

The Nepalese have long denied that their missions to Peking implied that they were in any way subordinate to China,[12] yet in the latter part of the Manchu period, even when China was no threat, they persisted in sending these missions, the last being in 1908. The Nepalese, moreover, are well aware that China has a long memory. In 1908 the Chinese endeavoured in a number of small ways to assert their suzerainty over Nepal, and, as late as 1924, when Percival Landon asked Dr Wellington Koo in Peking what the status of Nepal was, the reply contained a clear indication of dependence upon China.[13]

The British, in all their thinking about their Indian northern border, paid a very close attention to Nepalese opinions and reactions. It is most unlikely, for instance, that the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa of 1904 would ever have set out had Lord Curzon not been concerned at the impression which Russian influence in Tibet would create in Katmandu. No doubt the present Government of India has similar worries, but in this case relating to the Chinese.

Sikkim

To the east of Nepal lies the tiny state of Sikkim. The rulers of this small tract of mountains regarded themselves, when the British first came into direct contact with them

[11] See e.g. Northey (1937) & Tuker (1957).
[12] Jain (1959), pp. 104–7.
[13] Landon (1928), ii. 103.

early in the nineteenth century, as in some ways dependants of Tibet and China; and in the 1880s, even after no less than two treaties had placed Sikkimese foreign relations under British control, they still so considered themselves. The status of Sikkim, into which Tibetan troops advanced in 1886, produced a crisis in Anglo-Chinese relations culminating in the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 which recognized British supremacy in Sikkim and defined its borders with Tibet. The negotiations were protracted and irritating to the British, but they caused nothing like the annoyance that resulted from British attempts to demarcate the border defined in the 1890 Convention. After ten years of discussion, from 1894 to 1903, the British and Chinese failed to persuade the Tibetans to accept the 1890 boundary which had been arranged on their behalf.[14] There can be no doubt that the experience of these years deterred the British from joint boundary commissions with the Tibetans, resulted in the omission of all boundary matters from the Lhasa Convention of 1904, and greatly influenced the history of the McMahon Line. Today the status of Sikkim is as settled as can be expected on the Sino-Indian frontier, and India controls it beyond dispute; yet within the treaty basis of the Sikkim state still lie obscurities which could be exploited by the Chinese in support of a claim to suzerainty, if policy should indicate the utility of such a claim.

Bhutan

Finally, we must consider briefly the Himalayan state of Bhutan. In the late eighteenth century Bhutan was a dependency of Tibet. It was as mediator in a dispute between the East India Company and the Bhutanese that the Panchen Lama wrote to Warren Hastings in 1774,

[14] See Lamb (1960), pp. 174–274, where I have discussed these boundary questions in some detail.

and thus paved the way for the first British mission to Tibet, that of George Bogle. In 1865, after a half century of raids by Bhutanese hillmen on British territory, the Indian Government by the Treaty of Sinchula made Bhutan accept the status of a British protectorate and become the recipient of a British subsidy. However, the Sinchula treaty was accompanied by no measures which might have effectively modified Bhutanese relationships with the north. There was no British resident at the Bhutanese capital. In the 1880s occurred instances when the Chinese authorities in Lhasa were able to intervene in Bhutanese internal disputes. Bhutan at this period, indeed, was a state particularly prone to civil discord by virtue of its constitution, strange to Western ideas but quite characteristic of the Tibetan world. The supreme government was vested in two authorities, an elected chief known as the Deb Raja and a spiritual incarnation known as the Dharma Raja,[15] who was selected by methods similar to those employed in the discovery of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas of Tibet. Beneath these were a pair of satraps, the Tongsa and Paro Penlops, who wielded the real temporal authority in the land. The two Penlops were almost continually at war with each other, thus providing ample opportunities for Chinese or Tibetan mediation. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the Bhutanese constitution was changing rapidly with the emergence of the Tongsa Penlop as the chief power. The then holder of this office, the formidable Ugyen Wangchuk, gave valuable assistance to the British at the time of the Younghusband Mission; and as a reward the British recognized him as the first Maharaja of Bhutan. When, a few years after the British withdrawal from Lhasa in 1904, the Chinese, now more influential in Tibet than they had been for nearly a century, tried to demonstrate their

[15] These terms are of Indian origin.

authority over Bhutan, the British hastily concluded a fresh Anglo-Bhutanese treaty (January 1910) in which they increased the Maharaja's subsidy and promised to refrain from interference in all Bhutanese internal affairs in return for British control over Bhutanese foreign relations. In the last resort, however, British influence in Bhutan, as in Nepal, depended on maintaining British prestige and eliminating Chinese temptations. The various British proposals concerning Tibetan boundaries during the Simla Conference of 1913–14 were to a great extent influenced by this fact.

There can be no question that Chinese claims to suzerainty over Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan have by now worn pretty thin. No court of international law would uphold them today. The possibility of China exploiting these claims, however, is still a factor of importance in the present Himalayan situation for reasons which are psychological rather than legal. Such claims, expressed in vague terms of association with the five races of the Chinese People's Republic, may have some political appeal to the inhabitants of the Himalayan states who do not always find the policy of the Indian Republic as altruistic as some Indian statesmen profess. None of these states can stand alone. China may perhaps, by a clever statement of traditional relationships, make herself appear an attractive alternative to India in this respect.

4

Maps, Treaties, and Documents

In most civilized countries disputes between private citizens which cannot be settled by friendly discussion are submitted to the law courts. A solution is reached by the presentation and assessment of evidence which must first satisfy certain criteria of admissibility. The rules of evidence which most legal systems have evolved are essential to a fair and orderly hearing. Without them the courts would resemble a Hobbesian state of nature and the need for Leviathan would be great. It is to be regretted that just this state of affairs applies to many international disputes; and no arguments are more in need of a touchstone for the assessment of evidence than those concerned with the whereabouts of boundaries. It is intended, in this section, to touch on some of the problems which have to be faced in the consideration of the available evidence for the alignment of the Sino-Indian border, problems which in most cases could be overcome by the application of the basic legal doctrines of veracity, admissibility, and relevance.

Maps

Maps provide the best means of showing geographical features quickly and clearly. It is no cause for surprise that they have played an important part in the present dispute. It should be clear, however, that in the consideration of maps some rule of 'best evidence' should be

applied.[1] Some maps are reliable, others are not. Some maps are based on original surveys, others are highly derivative. Many maps are designed to show certain specific features, the route of a traveller, the distribution of mountain plants, the location of uranium deposits, and so on; and beyond the stated area of interest these maps may be of little evidential value. For example, the British War Office during the latter part of the nineteenth century was continually issuing maps to show the progress of Russian expansion into the Central Asian Khanates. These maps also indicated the boundaries of British India. War Office maps of this sort, however, were usually based on very old maps in the possession of the military cartographers, and their creators would claim for them no accuracy outside their designed sphere. They showed where the Russians were, but they were not meant to do more than indicate generally where the British were. The northern boundary of Kashmir on these particular maps fluctuates violently, and careful selection could produce a boundary alignment to suit almost any case. These maps are probably good evidence as to where the War Office thought the Russians had got to at a particular time. They are certainly not 'best evidence' for the British boundary.

Some British surveys of frontier regions during the nineteenth century had as one of their main objectives the accurate determination of the alignment of the boundary. Such an intention had Strachey in the late

[1] As M. Huber wisely noted in the celebrated *Palmas Island Arbitration* of 1928, 'only with the greatest caution can account be taken of maps in deciding a question of sovereignty'. Huber then went on to outline some criteria for the assessment of the evidence of maps along much the same lines as are adopted here. I am indebted to Bruce Burton for bringing Huber's remarks to my attention.

For some observations on the role played by maps in the present dispute see Kirk, in *Scottish Geog. Mag.* (1960), p. 11 & Green, in *China Q.* (1960), pp. 55–7).

1840s, and so also the Kashmir Survey which officially completed its task in November 1864.[2] Henry Strachey, and the Kashmir surveyors, like Godwin Austen, made careful inquiries as to the whereabouts of the traditional boundary. By 'traditional' they meant the boundary as the local people in the frontier region described it rather than the alignment claimed by the Kashmir Durbar which was infected with Gulab Singh's expansionist ideas. The results of the Kashmir Survey were published as an Atlas in 1868, and they give a good indication of the Ladakh–Tibet boundary over some of its length.[3] Unfortunately, some sections of the Kashmir survey operations were carried on with rather less care than would have been desirable. The entire Aksai Chin region, as shown in the 1868 maps, is based on the work of W. H. Johnson, and this has been much criticized because of its manifest inaccuracy.[4] Hence in the 1868 Kashmir Atlas we have two distinct degrees of reliability. From just north of the Panggong lake southwards the survey was admirable, and the boundary marked represents the informed opinion of the surveyors. North of the Panggong lake and the Changchenmo valley the survey is incredibly inaccurate, the work of W. H. Johnson in 1864 and 1865, and the boundary marked is patently absurd. It extends some eighty miles north of the present Indian claim line in so far as it is possible to plot that line at all on this particular

[2] Strachey's map, in two sheets at 8 miles to the inch, can be seen in the Map Rooms of the Royal Geographical Society and the India Office Library. It has been reproduced, much reduced, in *Atlas*, maps 11 & 12. For a brief account of the Kashmir Survey, see Phillimore, in *Himalayan J.* (1959–60).

[3] *Photozincographed Sections of part of the Survey of Kashmir, Ladak and Baltistan or Little Tibet*, Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, Dehra Dun, Oct. 1868; 20 sheets at a scale of 16 miles to the inch (I.O. Map Room, cat. no. F/IV/16).

[4] On Johnson's defects as a surveyor see Mason (1955), p. 80; Wood (1922), pp. 28–30; Stein, in *Alpine J.* (1921).

map.[5] Thus as valid evidence the Kashmir Atlas of 1868 would need to be accompanied by other documentary material to indicate the reliability of its various sheets.

Fortunately there is one map of Kashmir, dated 1874, which is both based on good surveys and accompanied by explanatory notes about the boundary. This map has been quoted by the Chinese and the Indian sides in the dispute, though the notes have been little used by both, probably because they support neither boundary claims. I refer to the map accompanying F. Drew's *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories* (1875). It is on a good scale, 16 miles to the inch, and is based partly on the 1868 Kashmir Atlas and partly on Drew's own surveys (he was Governor of Ladakh in 1871). Drew has much improved on Johnson's effort to describe the Aksai Chin region, which he notes, 'necessarily has not the same degree of detail as the maps published by [the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India] . . . of tracts which have been regularly surveyed, for it was made on a hurried journey over ground where to halt was to starve'.[6]

To his own map Drew adds the following note:

> We now come to the Yarkand territory. . . . As to the boundary of this, from the Mustagh Pass to the Karakoram Pass, there is no doubt whatever. A great watershed range divides the two territories [Turkestan and Kashmir]. But it will be observed that from the Karakoram Pass eastward to past the meridian of 80°, the line is more finely dotted. This has been done to denote that here the boundary is not defined. There has been no authoritative demarcation of it at all; and as the country is quite uninhabited for more than a hundred

[5] Johnson's map of the Aksai Chin area (but with the lower portion omitted) has been published in *Atlas*, map 13. The complete *Map Illustrating the Route Taken by Mr Johnson, Civil Asst G.T. Survey, in travelling from Leh to Khotan and back in 1865*, published by the G.T. Survey of India, may be seen in the I.O. Map Room, cat. no. F/V/1.

[6] Drew, p. 332.

> miles east and west and north and south I cannot apply the principle of representing the state of actual occupation. I have by the dotted boundary only represented my own opinion of what would be defined were the powers interested to attempt to agree to a boundary. At the same time this dotted line does not go against any actual facts of occupation.
>
> These last remarks apply also to the next section, from the Kuenlun Mountains southwards to the head of the Changchenmo Valley; for that distance the boundary between the Maharaja's country and Chinese Tibet is equally doubtful.
>
> From the pass at the head of the Changchenmo Valley southwards the boundary is again made stronger. Here it represents actual occupation so far as it divides pasture-lands frequented in summer by the Maharaja's subjects from those occupied by the subjects of Lhasa. It is true that with respect to the neighbourhood of Panggong Lake there have been boundary disputes which may now be said to be latent. There has never been any formal agreement on this subject. I myself do not pretend to decide as to the matter of right, but here again I can vouch that the boundary marked accurately represents the present state. For this part my information dates from 1871, when I was Governor of Ladakh. This applies also to the rest of the boundary between the Maharaja's and the Chinese territories.[7]

Drew's map, while based on the best surveys, is not, it should be noted, an *official* map. The distinction between official and unofficial maps is one of importance in boundary questions, though to some extent liable to exaggeration. By an official map is generally understood a map published by a governmental body. Some such maps may well have the force of being official statements of boundary alignments. Others may not. At all events, it is reasonable to demand that an official map, to be considered as a detailed statement of boundary alignments, should at least be based on official surveys. The map published by

[7] Ibid. p. 496.

the Chinese Posts in 1919, to which the Indian side has referred and which is printed in the *Atlas* as map 17, is certainly an official map, but it is clearly based on a non-Chinese survey and the boundary line shown on it has been copied without consideration from a non-Chinese map. Its value as evidence for the boundary alignment is slight, though it does suggest that members of some Chinese Government departments in 1919 were not giving much thought to boundary matters. Similarly, the Chinese side have recently included in a collection of maps of the boundary dispute (*Peking Review*, 30 Nov. 1962, reference map 1) a map entitled 'The Northern Frontier of British Hindoostan' published by the Office of the Surveyor General, Calcutta, 1862. This shows a northern boundary of Kashmir in close agreement with the Chinese claim-line. On closer examination, however, it is found that this particular map was 'extracted in the Survey General's Office, Calcutta, from Keith Johnston's Atlas, 1860'. The original map, therefore, was drawn before the results of the Kashmir survey were completed, let alone published, and its source, a Scottish cartographer, is highly unofficial. It certainly shows the 'frontier', in McMahon's sense; but as an indicator of exact boundary alignment its value is negligible. Unofficial maps such as that of Drew, carefully compiled from official surveys by a former official with personal experience of surveying problems, are certainly far better evidence than either of the two examples of official maps which have just been given.

One category of unofficial map is particularly liable to misinterpretation. This is the map found at the back of a travel book. Some such maps are, from the point of view of survey, of admirable reliability. Sir Aurel Stein, for example, usually travelled with an entourage of trained surveyors borrowed from the Government of India, and many of his maps are real contributions to cartography.

Most travellers, however, tend to leave the matter of maps to their publisher. The boundaries shown on these may be no more than the boundaries shown on the map from which the publisher's draughtsman made his copy, and as evidence they may be, to use a legal simile, no better than hearsay at third or fourth hand. The traveller's own narrative, in fact, may prove to be much more useful than his map. The dangers inherent in any attempt to draw profound conclusions from travellers' maps are well illustrated by Owen Lattimore in his *Pivot of Asia*. In an appendix to this useful compilation Lattimore argued that in the 1920s the British were preparing the way for a northwards advance of the India–Sinkiang boundary because, while maps before 1914 generally showed a wedge of Afghanistan separating British from Russian territory, in some British travel accounts published since the First World War there are maps showing the British Indian boundary in actual contact with that of Soviet Russia. Lattimore saw in these cartographical differences a reflection of changes in British policy: in fact, however, all that had happened was that some draughtsmen had been careless.[8]

The evidence of maps in the Sino-Indian boundary dispute has been particularly difficult to assess because of the complexities of the geography of the disputed areas. No more than a small minority of those who in recent years have written on the crisis in Sino-Indian relations can have been in possession of a very clear picture of Himalayan topography, and there has been as a result much confusion over the significance of geographical terms. Much of the Western Sector dispute, for example, arises from arguments as to whether the Sino-Indian boundary should follow the Karakoram or the Kunlun range. In the neighbourhood of Aksai Chin it is not always easy to define precisely the line of demarcation

[8] See 'The Sinkiang–Hunza Boundary', *JRCAS* (1951), pp. 73–81.

between the two mountain systems. In general it may be stated that the Karakoram range runs south-east from the Karakoram Pass and is here separated from the Kunlun range by the basin of the upper Karakash river. The Karakoram Pass, at all events, is in the Karakoram range and not in the Kunlun range. G. F. Hudson, however, repeated in a recent paper a common confusion between these two ranges when he referred to the boundary pillar which the Chinese set up in 1892 '64 miles south of Suget' —which point the 1:1,000,000 map shows beyond doubt is the very summit of the Karakoram Pass—as proving that in 1892 the Chinese 'accepted the Kuen Lun range as the frontier'.[9] The Chinese, in fact, erected this particular pillar in support of their claim that the Karakoram range was the frontier. Similar confusions have arisen in the literature on the disputed boundary in the Assam Himalaya. Too little use, it would seem, has been made of the international series of 1:1,000,000 (16 miles to the inch) maps of the boundary areas.[10] These are not always entirely reliable; but they suffice to illuminate most of the geographical issues raised by the Sino-Indian boundary dispute.

Treaties

As contracts are to lawyers, so treaties are to diplomats; and, like contracts, treaties often require skilled interpretation. In the present boundary dispute two groups of international agreements have figured prominently, the Kashmir–Tibet agreement of 1842 (reaffirming the Ladakh–Tibet agreement of 1683, or 1684, or 1687), and the Simla Convention of 27 April and 3 July 1914 with the related Anglo-Tibetan exchange of notes of 24 and 25

[9] See Hudson (1963).

[10] The sheet numbers for the maps in this series which cover the disputed boundary are given on p. 192 below.

March 1914. There will be occasion to discuss these instruments later on. They are mentioned here because they provide good examples of some of the problems involved in boundary treaties.

The 1842 agreement between Gulab Singh and the Tibetans is fairly typical of the kind of instrument resulting from the relations between two Asian states uninfluenced by the western traditions of Grotius and his intellectual descendants. We have here in fact two agreements, one on the part of Gulab Singh and one on the part of his suzerain the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore. For both agreements there appears to have been a Persian and a Tibetan text, making four texts in all. There is no provision for a single definitive text, and the translations which K. M. Panikkar has published of the various texts show considerable variation in the wording.[11] Here alone is enough material to keep skilled diplomats arguing for generations. However, it would seem that all the texts are in essential agreement, namely, that the terms of the agreement of 1683/4/7 were still binding and that Gulab Singh in this respect had assumed the responsibilities of the former Kings of Ladakh. The 1842 texts refer to the boundaries of Ladakh as 'the old, established frontiers', but they do not specify them. Nor, surprising enough, it would seem, does the agreement of 1683/4/7, beyond stating that the Lhari stream at Demchok (on the Indus) should mark the boundary. This reference, of course, is to a point, not a line, and an attempt to convert one to the other is not unaccompanied by difficulties. No original text of this agreement has been produced. The version of it referred to by the Indian side during the 1960 talks was derived from the Ladakh chronicles; and the Chinese produced

[11] Panikkar (1930), pp. 84–9. The British do not appear to have had a formal opportunity to examine the Tibetan texts of this agreement until 1920–1. See *Indian Officials' Report*, pp. 53 & 63.

references in Tibetan chronicles to cast doubt on the Ladakhi version.[12] The two sides, moreover, found that they could not agree as to the whereabouts of the Lhari stream, the one distinct geographical expression to have emerged from all this discussion. All in all, these agreements leave an impression of an extraordinary lack of precision. The interpretation of this kind of material, in fact, requires the devoted labour of skilled orientalists, and is not really the work of modern diplomatists.

In the past the British had to cope with agreements of this kind both in their dealings with their native Indian subjects and the native states bordering on India, and in their attempts to define with Russia a limit to their Asian sphere of influence. In both cases the agreements served less as binding instruments than as talking points. The terms, if they suited the British, or if the British and the Russians agreed to abide by them, were accepted; if not, they were ignored. Indeed, considering the complexity of relationships which could result from the fluctuating fortunes of Asian states, this was the only rational approach. India herself, in her attitude to some past agreements with the Princely States, has thought thus. This does not mean that the 1842 agreement is worthless. Far from it. As a device to cover a compromise with traditional legality and thereby to save face all round, this instrument, for all its ambiguities, could be of the greatest value. As a means of determining the exact whereabouts of the

[12] *Indian Officials' Report*, pp. 60–1; *Chinese Officials' Report*, pp. 12–14. The question of Demchok is discussed further on pp. 62, 68 below.

A peculiar feature of the 1683/4/7 agreement, confirmed in 1842, was that it permitted Ladakh to retain control of a small enclave of territory in western Tibet, the neighbourhood of the village of Minsar in the region of Lake Manasarowar. Ladakh, it would seem, had pledged to devote the revenues of this land to the support of works of piety connected with the sacred mountain of Kailas. Kashmir collected revenue from Minsar right on into the twentieth century; but there is no evidence that the proceeds were put to any but secular use. See Kennion (1910), pp. 247–9.

traditional Sino-Indian boundary, however, it can only be regarded as defective.

The 1914 agreements, the two initialed versions of the Simla Convention, and the Anglo-Tibetan notes, can be assessed by criteria that can hardly be applied to the 1842 instrument. Any competent international lawyer could come to a valid conclusion about them, provided he was in possession of sufficient information; but in the turmoil of the present dispute and, indeed, of arguments which have gone on since 1914, the facts are not easy to come by.

Let us consider the Simla Convention. The Tibetan, British, and Chinese delegates initialed the text of this on 27 April 1914. Thereupon the Chinese Government repudiated the action of its representative. On 3 July 1914 the Tibetan and British delegates, after attempts to persuade China to modify her attitude had failed, initialed the Convention and signed a declaration to the effect that they would abide by its terms, the benefits of which would be denied to China pending her signature. I was surprised to find, on going through the books relating to Tibet in the Chatham House Library, that no less than six publications, some of them the work of lawyers and two produced by British official bodies, state or imply that the Convention was *signed* on 3 July 1914 by the British and Tibetans;[13] and a further book, by two Chinese (but definitely non-Communist) writers, confines itself to the 27 April text and does not mention that of 3 July at all.[14] The 3 July text was *initialed*: it was not signed, and this distinction is no mere debating point.[15]

[13] Tibet Society (1961), p. 18; Foreign Office (1920), p. 42; Central Office of Information (1958), p. 5; Z. Ahmad (1960), p. 21; International Commission of Jurists (1959), p. 86 & (1960), p. 140.

[14] Shen & Liu (1953).

[15] Initialing can imply no more than that the delegates have accepted the initialed text as the valid text arising from the negotiations. To become binding the agreement would have to be signed and, probably, ratified.

Another point of some possible significance about these two texts has, it would seem, so far escaped comment: the two texts are not identical.[16] Between April and July 1914 Article 10 of the Convention was changed completely. What significance does this hold for the validity, if any, of the Chinese adhesion to the 27 April 1914 text?

Another point to consider in treaties of this kind is whether they conflict with previous but still valid engagements. The Simla Conference was concerned fundamentally with the defining of spheres of influence on the Tibetan plateau. Tibet, in so far as it affected British spheres of influence, had already been considered in some detail in the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907; and it was inevitable that the Simla provisions of 1914 should conflict to some extent with terms agreed upon at St Petersburg in 1907. Much had happened between those years, including the collapse of the Manchu dynasty in China and its replacement by a Republican régime. One may well suppose that the terms made at Simla, therefore, would have required the consent of St Petersburg. Without such Russian consent, could the British in international law agree to Article 8 of the Simla Convention (both texts), which permitted a British official to visit Lhasa, when in Article 3 of the Anglo-Russian Convention of

[16] The 3 July 1914 text was published in Aitchison, 1929 ed. The 27 Apr. 1914 text has been published in *The Boundary Question between China and Tibet* (1940). This last work appears to have been sponsored by the Japanese for far from disinterested reasons, but the documents which it prints are certainly genuine.

Art. 10 in the 27 Apr. 1914 text reads as follows: 'In case of difference between the Governments of China and Tibet in regard to questions arising out of this Convention, the aforesaid Governments engage to refer them to the British Government for equitable adjustment.' In the 3 July 1914 text the article is replaced by the following: 'The English, Chinese and Tibetan texts of the present Convention have been carefully examined and found to correspond, but in the event of there being any difference of meaning between them the English text shall be authoritative.'

1907 relating to Tibet 'the British and Russian Governments respectively agree not to send Representatives to Lhasa'? Similar questions arise from a consideration of the Anglo-Tibetan notes of 24 and 25 March 1914. Did these conflict with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906?[17] In these agreements the British declared that they would neither annex Tibetan territory, nor interfere in Tibetan internal administration; yet the Anglo-Tibetan notes of March 1914 involved the transfer to British sovereignty of at least one Tibetan-administered district, Tawang.

Finally, as far as treaties are concerned, the category of agreement by which the British formalized so many of their dealings with the Assam hill tribes in the period before 1914 should be noted. There are a fair number of these documents, some of which have recently been cited as evidence for the pre-1914 exercise of British sovereignty over the Assam Himalaya up to the traditional frontier along the mountain crests. These treaties also have their problems of interpretation. For example, in 1844 F. Jenkins, Agent for the Governor-General for the North East Frontier, entered into an agreement with the following persons: Changjoi Satrajah, Sreng Satrajah, Cheeng Dundoo Satrajah, all of Naregoon, and Tong Dabee Rajah, Cheng Dundoo Brahmee, Poonjai Bramee, all of Takhal Tooroom. From a careful reading of the text of this instrument it would seem that these persons agreed, in return for an annual payment of Rs 5,000, to surrender to the British all rights that they may have possessed in the Kariapara Duar, which is now part of Assam situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

[17] The texts of these treaties, and of nearly all the treaties relating to Tibetan foreign policy past and present, have been printed as an appendix to Richardson (1962), and for this reason I have not quoted the texts in full here.

This same Rs 5,000 subsidy, which continued to be paid right up to the end of British rule in India, has recently been described as a symbol of the political subordination to India of Tawang, whence it appears the six gentlemen named in the 1844 agreement came. It is necessary, however, before one can be reasonably sure as to what this text actually means, to know a great deal more about the signatories. Who were they? What powers had they to make such engagements?[18]

Some of the nineteenth-century British agreements with the hill tribes of Assam were decidedly strange. A modern international lawyer would find them difficult to discuss in accepted European terms. For example: in British engagements with one section of the Aka tribes, the tribesmen accepted a subsidy in return for their promise not to violate the British border, and they bound themselves by oath thus: 'we hereby swear according to our customs, by taking in our hands the skin of a tiger, that of a bear, and elephant's dung, and by killing a fowl'.[19] Suppose it turned out that the British negotiator of this agreement was in error, or had been misled, and that custom actually demanded the use of cow-dung not elephant-dung? Would the agreement still be valid? This sort of question was certainly of importance to the tribesmen signatories. This possibly facetious example may still suggest that this category of agreement can never, if only because of its difficulty of interpretation, be given the same emphasis as a properly drafted engagement between two modern, civilized, powers.

Documents

If there are doubts about the exact implications of the treaties, so also are there about the meaning of some of the

[18] See Aitchison, 1909 ed., ii. 297.

[19] See ibid. pp. 235–44.

local administrative records which have been produced during the course of the boundary dispute. Tax returns, land revenue accounts, the record of the payment of monastic dues, reports of visits by officials, what precisely do all these mean? Are payments to monasteries evidence of political control, or do they merely show local piety? This particular question should be familiar to the student of English constitutional history in pre-Reformation times. Is land tax a true tax, or merely rent from private estates? The Maharaja of Sikkim, for instance, at one time held land in Chumbi in Tibet from which he collected rent and for which he paid tax to the Tibetan authorities. Did these facts imply either that part of Chumbi came under the sovereignty of Sikkim, or that Sikkim, by virtue of its ruler paying taxes to Tibet, was a Tibetan subject state? These are not easy questions to answer. When an official from either side entered a portion of the disputed territory, was he acting as an administrator, thus demonstrating sovereignty, or was he merely travelling across the border, like President de Gaulle on a visit to Germany? Enough has been said to suggest that without a great measure of basic agreement the consideration of this category of evidence can result in much fruitless discussion, as indeed it did between the Tibetan and Chinese sides during the Simla Conference in 1913 and 1914.

Narratives of travel

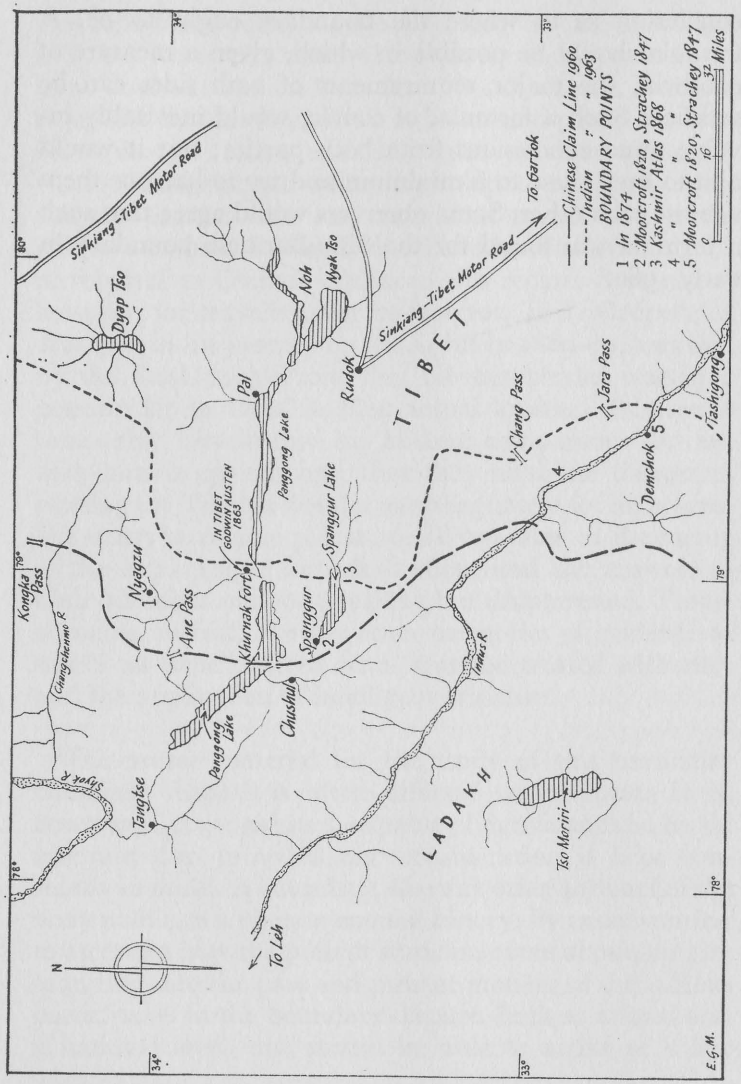
One final category of evidence must be considered here, the narratives of unofficial travellers. Such accounts, provided reliance can be placed on their accuracy—and this has not always proved possible,—can provide extremely useful information on the actual state of occupation at a particular moment of time. A study of travel narratives from a number of periods may enable one to

plot individual points on the boundary in time as well as in space. European travel accounts, for instance, leave us in no doubt at all that from the 1880s the Lanak Pass was regarded by the British as a boundary point between Kashmir and Tibet, and that from the late 1860s the whole Changchenmo valley right up to the pass at its extreme eastern end was considered to fall within the effective limits of British India. Here is valuable evidence in rebuttal to Chinese claims in this region. Sometimes, however, the traveller may be in error. T. T. Cooper, for example, in his journey up the Lohit in 1869–70, was told by the local people that the Tibetan border was in a position far south of its then actual location.[20] It seems reasonably certain that his Mishmi companions did not wish him to go on, and that they used the danger of crossing the Tibetan frontier as an argument for his return. Travellers in remote places are all too often at the mercy of the local people for information, and the answers to their questions may be anything but disinterested. Travel accounts, in fact, like the other categories of evidence to which we have referred here, must be treated with care and the application of intelligent criticism.

The source material for the study of this particular boundary dispute is often difficult to interpret. It is, however, I am convinced, capable of significant and useful interpretation provided one consideration is kept constantly in mind. A boundary, like any other product of the body politic, is a phenomenon of history. By endeavouring to ascertain how the present situation came about, and by inquiring into the past and present motives of the various participants in the boundary dispute, both at a local and a national level, one should be able to arrive at a fair

[20] Cooper (1873), p. 217. A curious use of this particular reference has been made in *Indian Officials' Report*, p. 106.

conclusion as to where the boundary ought to be. A formula should be possible in which, given a measure of goodwill, the major requirements of both sides can be satisfied. Such a formula, of course, would inevitably involve some concessions from both parties; but it would aim to keep these to a minimum and try to balance them against each other. Some observers would agree that such a formula was found for the Sino-Burmese boundary in early 1960.



MAP 5. THE TIBET–LADAKH BORDER

5

The Ladakh–Tibet Boundary in 1864

THIS section is concerned with the Ladakh–Tibet boundary from the extreme eastern end of the Changchenmo valley southwards across the region of the Panggong and Spanggur lakes to the Indus, and thence by way of the eastern edge of Spiti to the Sutlej. The boundary to the north of the Changchenmo valley, in the region now generally described as Aksai Chin, will be the subject of the next section. There are a number of important differences between these two sections of boundary which make it convenient to treat them separately.

Ladakh

By 1864 Ladakh, as part of Gulab Singh's creation, the Kashmir state, had been under British protection for eighteen years. The border regions under discussion here had been visited by British officials and had been surveyed with care and accuracy. As has already been observed, the Kashmir Survey, completed formally in 1864, left little to be desired for the country to the south of the Changchenmo; and here the Government of India could, had the need arisen, have at this time specified the line of the Ladakh–Tibet boundary with great precision. After 1864, applying Drew's 'principle of representing the state of actual occupation',[1] the boundary altered very little. There appear to have been minor advances of Kashmir occupation, or claim, in the region of the Panggong lake

[1] See above, p. 45.

and up the Indus, and some of these seem to have been the subject of Anglo-Tibetan discussion in 1924;[2] but in general the 1864 boundary here was the boundary on 14 August 1947.

Ladakh, as part of Gulab Singh's possessions, came under British protection in March 1846 by the Treaty of Amritsar.[3] At this time the British were far from clear as to the precise limits of this new addition to their empire, but from the accounts of British travellers in the north-western mountains of India during the preceding forty years they had sufficient information upon which to base a general outline. These early travellers did not contribute directly to the attempts at boundary definition after the Amritsar Treaty; but one of them, William Moorcroft, who resided at Leh, the Ladakh capital, from 1820–2, took some pains to establish the limits of Ladakh, a region which was then still free of Gulab Singh's control and which Moorcroft hoped to bring into an alliance with the East India Company.[4]

[2] These discussions, between Major Robson and the two *Garpons*, or Governors, of the Tibetan administrative centre of Gartok, are referred to in *Indian Officials' Report*, p. 55. The discussions concerned the status of Khurnak and Niagzu, which the Tibetans claimed and which, it would seem, Kashmir was then administering. Khurnak, in 1864, was certainly on the Tibetan side of the boundary, and Niagzu was on the boundary line: so we may suspect that in this area there was some Kashmir advance between 1864 and 1924. The area involved, however, was certainly very small.

[3] The full text of this treaty is included in Panikkar (1953).

[4] The best general account of European travel and exploration in Ladakh, the Karakoram, and the Kunlun is Dainelli (1934). This covers the period from the seventeenth century until about 1930. Its treatment of Moorcroft's travels, and those of his companion Trebeck, is admirable. Each traveller's account is accompanied by a first-class route map, so one can see exactly where he went at a glance. It is to be regretted that not all summaries of the history of travel and exploration in India's northern mountains display the same meticulous attention to detail of Dainelli's work.

Moorcroft's own narrative was published in 1841 (see Moorcroft & Trebeck (1841)).

Moorcroft's Ladakh travels

Moorcroft's main interest in Ladakh was as a route to the markets of Chinese Turkestan where he felt that the British should be able to compete with the commerce of Russia. His Ladakh travels, ostensibly in search of Central Asian horses for the East India Company stud, were the product of wide and mainly unofficial commercial interests. He was in part supported by a group of Calcutta merchants, on whose behalf he negotiated a treaty with the Ladakh authorities. His ambition, which the Chinese refused to humour, was to reach Yarkand. His travels produced a voluminous correspondence, much of which is now preserved in the India Office Library as the Moorcroft MSS. Among these papers is an account of the Chinese and Tibetan frontiers of Ladakh (Moorcroft MSS, C/42). It is undated, but clearly relates to the period 1820–2.

In the extreme north-west Moorcroft locates the Chinese boundary at the Karakoram Pass. Somewhere to the east of this pass lies the border between Ladakh and the Chinese district of Khotan, but on this alignment, beyond noting that the Karakash river has its sources in Khotanese territory, Moorcroft is most vague.[5] He hints that there are routes to the east of the Karakoram Pass into Chinese Turkestan, but that the Chinese authorities severely punish any who are caught making use of them (no doubt to ensure that all traffic passed through the customs). Between the Karakoram Pass and the Panggong lake Moorcroft gives no boundary points. South of the Panggong lake, however, he states that the Tibet–Ladakh border was located between Chushul and a place he calls *Punjoor* which, from his distances, is almost certainly the

[5] See also I.O., Moorcroft MSS G/28 no. 30, 'Notice on Khoten', dated Leh, 15 Apr. 1821.

same as Spanggur, a village at the extreme western tip of Spanggur lake. Finally, on the Indus, Moorcroft refers to the village of Demchok, which, he says, belongs to Gartok in Tibet and is thus on the eastern side of the boundary.[6] These two points, if *Punjoor* is indeed Spanggur, suggest here a boundary line about ten miles to the west of the present Indian claim line and very close to the Chinese claim line. A difference of ten miles in thinly populated territory is of no great importance. It is to be regretted that Moorcroft did not have more to say about the northern sector of the boundary between the Karakoram Pass and the Panggong lake.

[6] The map appended to Fraser (1820) shows Demchok in Ladakh. Since Fraser's travels were made in 1815, and thus antedate Moorcroft's residence at Leh, it might be argued that Fraser was indicating the state of affairs obtaining at a period slightly earlier than that described by Moorcroft. So (*Indian Officials' Report,* p. 43) the Indian side has recently argued, referring to Fraser as an early traveller in Ladakh and a person who had actually visited Demchok, which Moorcroft never did.

An examination of Fraser's book, however, shows that he did not visit Ladakh at all, his farthest point in the mountains being in the region of the Sutlej; nor did he visit Demchok. His information on routes in Ladakh and western Tibet was derived mainly from one Puttee Ram, a native of Bashahar state on the Sutlej. Of Puttee Ram's information, Fraser noted: 'Routes such as these in question, extracted with great labour from a man not accustomed to yield such information, will present numerous inconsistencies' (pp. 300–1, 309). One such inconsistency is clearly the location of Demchok; and there seems no good reason why we should accord greater value to Puttee Ram's memory than to the careful investigations of Moorcroft.

The Indian side have also quoted an even earlier traveller, the Jesuit Desideri, who described, early in the eighteenth century, Tashigong as being the frontier town on the Tibetan side of the Tibet–Ladakh boundary, with the implied conclusion that it therefore followed that Demchok was in Ladakh. Desideri does not appear to have mentioned Demchok at all; and all his account can be made to suggest was that Tashigong was the last fortress town in Tibet. This is undoubtedly true, and Tashigong in this respect performed the same role as Phari on the Tibetan side of the Sikkim–Tibet boundary. Like Phari, however, Tashigong may well have been some distance away from the actual boundary, which may well in 1715, as in 1820, have been at the otherwise insignificant place called Demchok. See Desideri (1932), pp. 81–3.

Gulab Singh and the Amritsar Treaty

The Ladakh state which Moorcroft knew ceased to exist in 1834 when Gulab Singh conquered it. In 1841 Gulab Singh, having in the meantime added to his possessions Baltistan (or Little Tibet) on the Indus downstream from Ladakh, proceeded to undertake the conquest of Western Tibet. His motive was in part a quest for more territory and in part a desire to acquire control of the production of the Tibetan wool on which the Kashmir shawl industry depended for its raw material. Ladakh, by virtue of arrangements dating back to the seventeenth century, already held a monopoly of the carrying trade in this commodity from Tibet to the Kashmir vale. Gulab Singh's project, which he entrusted to his ablest commander Zorawar Singh, aroused no enthusiasm in British breasts. The East India Company had for some years been trying to divert shawl wool from Ladakh and Kashmir into its own possessions, and it saw in Gulab Singh's occupation of the grazing land where the wool was produced a fatal blow to its hopes. Moreover, Gulab Singh was a dependant of the Sikh Kingdom of Lahore which, in turn, was at that moment an ally of the British. Since Tibet was, so the British thought, Chinese territory, there was a danger that the Chinese might regard Gulab Singh's advance as a British move to attack China in the rear. The British, in 1841, were at war with China. Would the Chinese, as a countermeasure, order their Gurkha dependants in Nepal to attack British India? Thus the British gave serious thought to intervention; but the need for direct British meddling in these troubled waters was removed, after Zorawar Singh's army had been annihilated near Lake Manasarowar in western Tibet and after a Tibetan counter-attack had been repulsed by the

Dogras near Leh, by Gulab Singh and the Tibetans coming to terms in the autumn of 1842.[7]

In 1846, when the Amritsar treaty was being negotiated, the memory of these events was still fresh. The British, therefore, resolved to try to prevent future crises on the Kashmir–Tibet border. As Alexander Cunningham, who was one of the first British officials to try to define this particular boundary, wrote:

> it seemed not improbable that the hope of plunder and the desire of revenge might tempt . . . [Gulab Singh] . . . to repeat the expedition of 1841 in the Lhassan territory. Such an occurrence would have at once stopped the importation of shawl wool into our territory, and have closed the whole of the petty commerce of our hill states with Tibet. It was possible also that our peaceful relations with the Chinese Emperor might be considerably embarrassed by His Celestial Majesty's ignorance of any distinction between the rulers of India and the rulers of Kashmir. . . . The British Government decided to remove the most common cause of all disputes in the East—an unsettled boundary.[8]

Hence in the Amritsar treaty were clauses prohibiting Gulab Singh from further expanding his territory and providing for the demarcation of his boundaries by a Boundary Commission to which, in July 1846, Alexander Cunningham and Vans Agnew were deputed.

The Boundary Commission of 1846

The British hoped that the Boundary Commission of 1846 would be tripartite, and have Chinese as well as Kashmiri and British representation. By way of Sir John Davies, the Governor of the newly established British Colony of Hong Kong (in 1842 after the Opium War), Lord Hardinge, the Governor-General of India, addressed

[7] For a fuller discussion, see Lamb, in *J. Rl. As. Soc.* (1958).

[8] Cunningham (1854), p. 12.

a letter to the Chinese inviting them to take part or, at least, to permit their Tibetan dependants to do so. Hardinge had a further interest in Chinese co-operation. He found that the arrangement of 1842 by which Gulab Singh had come to terms with the Tibetans conflicted with British interests. In the first place, the impression which Hardinge had derived of the 1842 treaty was that it affirmed Ladakh, now part of British India, as a Tibetan dependency; and, in the words of another British official writing of Gulab Singh in 1842, 'it is not for us to share with others the allegiance of petty princes'. In the second place, it appeared that the 1842 agreement conferred on Gulab Singh a monopoly of the shawl trade to the detriment of his fellow British Indian subjects. For these reasons, Lord Hardinge said in the note which he addressed to the Chinese and Tibetans on this subject, 'I have deemed it expedient that certain portions of the Treaty . . . [of 1842] . . . should be cancelled as these were in their nature highly injurious to the interests of the British Government and its dependants'.[9]

The Chinese failed to take part in the Boundary Commission, and so also did the Tibetans. Sir John Davies at Hong Kong duly conveyed Lord Hardinge's communications to the Canton authorities, who were his sole link with Peking, and received, but not until he had written several letters of reminder, highly evasive replies. In one of these the Canton Viceroy noted that the Tibet–Ladakh boundaries 'have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed so that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement, and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures for fixing them'. In recent years attempts have been made to read into these words a

[9] I.O., *Encl. to Secret Letters from India*, vol. 106, No. 33, Lord Hardinge to the Vizier of Lhassa-Gartope . . . and to the authorities of Tibet, 4 Aug. 1846 (see below, App. II, where this document is reproduced).

Chinese acceptance of the Tibet–Ladakh boundary as a delimited alignment. Of course, the Chinese meant nothing of the sort. It is quite likely that Sir John Davies's letters were never sent on from Canton to Peking, and anything the Canton authorities might say could hardly be binding in Tibet. The Canton–Hong Kong correspondence of 1846–7, in fact, is quite characteristic of Chinese diplomatic procrastination during the nineteenth century; and there is a certain ironical satisfaction in the way that the present Indian Government have made use of past Chinese soft answers.[10]

The Boundary Commission of 1846, with Agnew and Cunningham, and that of the following year, with Cunningham, Henry Strachey, and Dr Thomson, did not carry out a demarcation jointly with the Chinese. Indeed, these Commissions, beyond laying down the boundary between Kashmir and Spiti, the latter being territory under direct British administration, could not be described as having carried out any demarcation at all. No Tibetans joined them. The Kashmir Government could hardly be said to have co-operated with them wholeheartedly. They did, however, determine fairly precisely the border alignment of Ladakh from Spiti to the eastern end of the Changchenmo valley, as is shown on Strachey's map to which reference has already been made. This, to a great extent satisfied British requirements. In the instructions to the British Commissioners in July 1846, Agnew and Cunningham were told to 'bear in mind that, it is not a strip more or less of barren or even productive territory that we want, but a clear and well defined boundary in a quarter likely to come little under observation'.[11] The

[10] The correspondence between India and Sir John Davies, and between Sir John Davies and the Canton authorities, may be found, ibid. vol. 106, no. 33; vol. 111, no. 48; vol. 114, no. 36.

[11] Ibid. vol. 106, no. 33, H. Lawrence to Vans Agnew 23 July 1846.

definition was mainly needed not to keep the Tibetans and Chinese from encroaching on British protected territory; quite the reverse, for

> it is an object to prevent the Jummoo Troops, Traders and People from turning our flank to the North Eastwards. The boundary line must, therefore, be run eastwards to such a point of territory, as is clearly beyond the Maharaja's [Kashmir] influence, and both the Jummoo and Tibetan authorities must be distinctly informed that no encroachment by any party on any pretence will be permitted.[12]

It may be supposed that as a device to restrain Kashmir the mere British knowledge of the more or less correct boundary alignment had its value.

The 1846 Commission was primarily concerned with the Spiti–Ladakh boundary, and for the demarcation of this it adopted a principle which served as a model in subsequent British attempts at boundary definition in the Himalayas. Noted Alexander Cunningham:

> In laying down a boundary through mountainous country it appeared to the Commissioners desirable to select such a plan as would completely preclude any possibility of further dispute. This the Commissioners believe they have found in their adoption as a boundary of such mountain ranges as form water-shed lines between the drainages of different rivers.[13]

While it is extremely doubtful that the concept of the watershed, as such, ever had any sanction in local tradition, yet there can be no doubt that Cunningham was right in proposing a watershed boundary. Boundaries along the fringes of the Tibetan world are perhaps better considered as series of points rather than as continuous lines. The points are generally located at passes or at the

[12] Ibid. H. Lawrence to A. Cunningham, 23 July 1846.

[13] In *J. As. Soc. Bengal* (1848).

crossing places of streams and rivers. To produce the line demanded by the requirements of cartography, the watershed is perhaps the only feasible device by which the points can be linked up into a modern boundary.

The Boundary Commission of 1847

The 1847 Commission established a number of such points along the Tibet–Ladakh border from Spiti to the Panggong lake. On the Indus the Commission found the meeting of Ladakh and Tibet to be at Demchok. Henry Strachey visited Demchok on 10 October 1847 and found that it 'is a hamlet of half a dozen huts and tents, not permanently inhabited, divided by a rivulet (entering the left bank of the Indus) which constitutes the boundary of this quarter between Gnari . . . [in Tibet] . . . and Ladakh'.[14] Tibetan frontier guards would not allow Strachey to continue up the Indus beyond this stream. North of the Panggong lake the Commission in 1847 could come to no firm conclusions. Dr Thomson, who travelled from Leh to the Karakoram Pass, remarked that north of the Panggong region 'every part of this country must be viewed as *terra incognita* so that in the direction of the North East the boundaries of Tibet cannot be correctly defined, but as the tract of country in question is totally uninhabited this is not of much consequence'.[15] Across these wastes, Thomson learnt, 'there was an unfrequented path by which Khoten [Khotan] might be reached, if the Chinese authorities were willing to permit it to be used', which, it appeared, they were not.[16] To this Chinese prohibition the unofficial English traveller C. T. Vigne, who visited

[14] I.O., *Encl. to Secret Letters from India*, vol. 114, no. 36, Strachey to Lawrence, 15 Nov. 1847.

[15] *Board's Collections*, vol. 2461, col. 136,806, Report on Western Tibet by Dr T. Thomson, 10 Oct. 1849.

[16] Thomson (1852), pp. 429–30.

Ladakh in 1835 just after Gulab Singh's conquest, also referred in his published narrative.[17]

Strachey and the 1842 agreement

Among the instructions for the Boundary Commissions of 1846 and 1847 there was expressed a wish for all the information obtainable on the 1842 agreement between the Tibetans and Gulab Singh, an instrument which, it has been seen, Lord Hardinge found objectionable on a number of counts, and on which he had communicated his views to the Chinese. Henry Strachey carried out the desired investigations, and, with special reference to Government of India proposals to attempt to discuss the 1842 agreement with the Chinese Resident at Lhasa, he made the following observations:

> I have also to suggest the inexpediency of repeating the mention made in the Governor General's letter of a treaty between the Chinese Government and the Lahore Durbar:[18] because no such treaty ever existed, so far from it, not even has the Tibetan Government of Lhasa ever so much as acknowledged the political existence of the Sikh or Dogra Maharaja.
>
> The idea of such a treaty originated I imagine in an arrangement made between two Agents of Gulab Singh, then Raja of Jammu, and two officers . . . of the Lhassan army which after repelling the Dogra invasion of their own territory was worsted again in the attempt to expel the usurpers from Ladakh also. Those officers were commissioned to exterminate the Dogra invaders of Tibet, and not to make treaties with them: nor was the agreement extorted from them under the

[17] Vigne (1844), ii. 343; see also Moorcroft's conclusion (p. 61 above).

[18] The reference here is to the confirmatory agreement by the Lahore Durbar, the suzerain of Gulab Singh and hence, in British eyes, the proper body to make binding agreements for Gulab Singh in the period prior to his transfer of allegiance to the British.

pressure of a reverse ever ratified by the Government of either party. The observance of its provisions to this day arises from the fact of its being nothing more than a confirmation without a single alteration of the arrangement formerly subsisting by an ancient treaty between the two Tibetan states of U Tsang and Ladakh. The Lhassan Government still keep to these arrangements from systematic adherence to old custom, good faith, regard for their brother Tibetans of Ladakh, and self interest which they imagine to be consulted by some of the provisions. The Pashm . . . [shawl wool] . . . monopoly continues to be infringed as always by smuggling with some connivance from the Lhassan officers in Gnari.

The Lhassan Government acknowledges no other authority in . . . [Ladakh] . . . than that of the rightful Prince of Ladakh, and sole representative of the ancient line of Tibetan Kings claiming descent from the great Shakiya through a series of twenty four centuries, now a minor living here in poverty, contempt and personal insecurity.

Communications offered to the Lhassan Authorities by the Agents of the Dogra Government are now rejected absolutely unnoticed, whilst the Chinese Resident himself receives with respect those of the fallen Gyalpo [King of Ladakh]. . . .[19]

These words, written some five years after the 1842 agreement was made, show clearly the complexities of a valid interpretation of this kind of document. The British view was that so long as the agreement did not prove actually detrimental to British interests they would leave it alone. To force the Kashmir Government to renounce it would only, it seemed, lead to misunderstandings in Tibet which, already in the late 1840s, the Government of India was considering as a field for British trade. Thus the exchange of missions between Lhasa and Leh were allowed to continue, even though many observers thought that they implied a degree of Ladakhi political subordination to

[19] I.O., *Encl. to Secret Letters from India*, vol. 114, no. 36, Strachey to Lawrence, Leh, 26 Jan. 1848.

Lhasa.[20] This exchange of missions, the so-called *Lapchak* Mission from Ladakh and the *Chapba* Mission from Lhasa, continued until after the British had left India. It seems that it was the Chinese Communist régime in Tibet which finally put a stop to these old and harmless exercises in oriental diplomacy. The really objectionable element of the 1842 agreement, the reference to a Ladakhi monopoly in the export of shawl wool from Western Tibet, the British had in fact declared cancelled in their communications to the Chinese and Tibetan Governments of 1846, communications which were never answered or even acknowledged.

The Boundary Commissions of 1846 and 1847 produced descriptions of the Ladakh–Tibet border from the northern side of the Panggong lake to Spiti which do not differ in major respects from the present Indian claim line; though the Commissions conceded a number of points which the Indian Government would today claim. Demchok, on the Indus, which now falls within the Indian claim line, was reported to be the actual boundary point. The whole of Spanggur lake, according to Strachey's map, was in Tibet;[21] and here the Commissions confirmed Moorcroft's account. Just to the north of Panggong lake Strachey's map located right on the boundary line the deserted and ruined fort of Khurnak, which India now claims and the Chinese occupation of which provided the occasion for perhaps the first Indian protest against Chinese trespass on Ladakhi soil, on 2 July 1958.[22] North

[20] See e.g. Kennion (1910), p. 253; Ramsay (1890), pp. 85–6; Bruce (1907), pp. 26–8. Kennion and Ramsay were both at one time stationed in Ladakh. Bruce was an officer with wide experience of the politics of the Himalayas and Karakoram. Their opinion seems to be that the Kashmir Government saw in the Ladakh missions no political significance, while the Tibetan Government considered them to be the symbol of Ladakhi political dependence upon Lhasa. Bruce also quotes an opinion to this effect by Ney Elias, another British official who served in Ladakh in the 1870s.

[21] *Atlas*, map 12.

[22] *White Paper* I, p. 22.

of the eastern end of the Changchenmo valley, however, the Commissions obtained no precise details as to boundary.

The Kashmir Survey

The Kashmir Survey which formally ended in 1864, while it could by no means be described as an official Boundary Commission, yet took careful note of boundary matters. Its results, published in the Kashmir Atlas of 1868, do not materially modify the picture of the boundary derived in the late 1840s.[23] Where Strachey had put the boundary actually at Demchok, the Kashmir Atlas (Sheet 17) put it about sixteen miles downstream on the Indus from Demchok, thus coming nearer to the Chinese than the Indian claim line.[24] Spanggur lake, which Strachey excluded completely from Ladakh, is now crossed towards its eastern end by the boundary line. Khurnak Fort, in Strachey on the boundary, is now clearly inside Tibet. During the Kashmir Survey the north shore of Panggong lake was explored by Captain Godwin Austen, after whom has been named the second highest mountain in the world (K2), in 1863. Godwin Austen has the following to say about this particular bone of contention:

> the said plain . . . [of Khurnak] . . . is a disputed piece of ground, the men of the Panggong district claim it; though, judging by the site of an old fort standing on a low rock on the north-western side of the plain, I should say that it undoubtedly belongs to the Lhassan authorities, by whom it was built years ago.[25]

[23] For more about the Kashmir Atlas, see above, pp. 43–4.

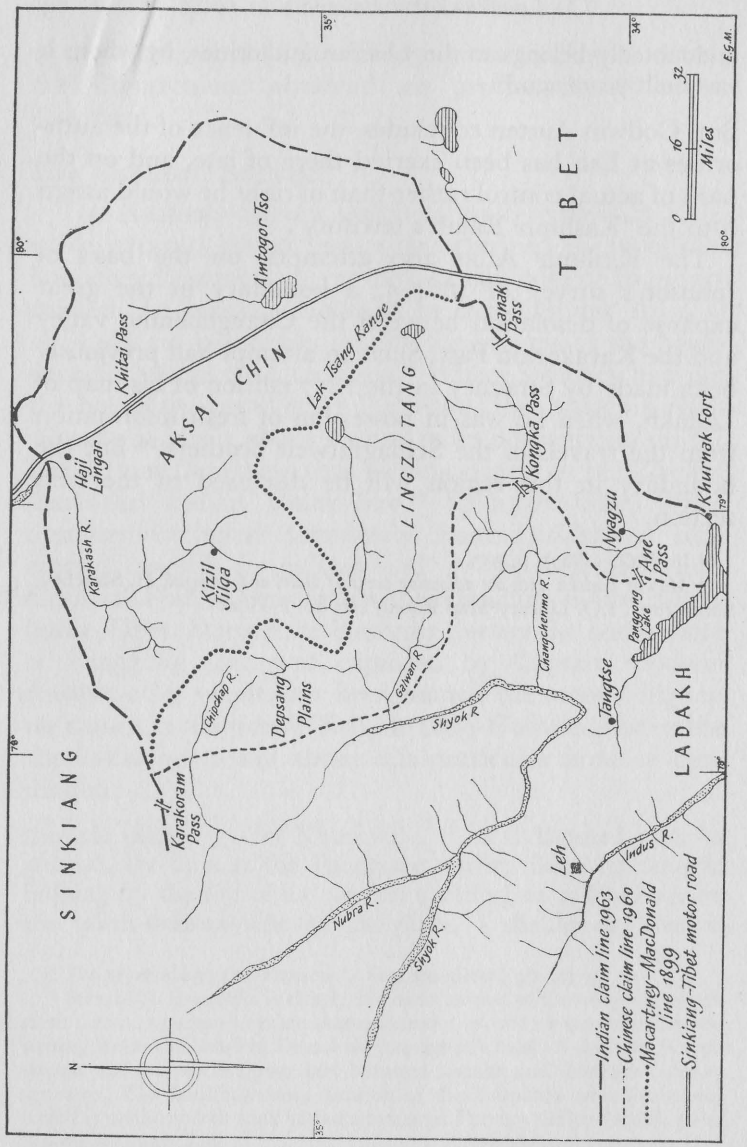
[24] Strachey's Demchok is clearly the same as that of the 1683/4/7 agreement (see p. 49 above), which source Ramsay (p. 181) is quoting when he writes, under the heading Demchok, 'on the left bank of the Lari Karpo stream which forms the boundary between Ladakh and Ghardok (Lhasa) territory'. The Kashmir Atlas location of the boundary near Demchok, which is confirmed in such recent sources as Foreign Office (1920), p. 4, is not easy to explain.

But, Godwin Austen concludes, the influence of the authorities at Leh has been exerted there of late, and on the basis of actual control rather than of right he would assign it to the 'Kashmir Rajah's territory'.

The Kashmir Atlas also attempts, on the basis of Johnson's survey of 1864–5, a boundary in the great expanse of desolation between the Changchenmo valley and the Karakoram Pass. Such an attempt had previously been made by Strachey in the 1857 edition of his map of Ladakh, when he was in possession of fresh information from the travels of the Schlagintweit brothers.[26] But the boundary in this region will be discussed in the next section.

[25] In *JRGS* (1867), p. 355.

[26] *Map of Ladakh with the adjoining parts of Balti and Monyul*, H. Strachey, Simla 1857. I.O. Library Map Room, cat. no. F/IV/8.



Map 6. Aksai Chin

6

The Aksai Chin Boundary in 1875

It has been seen how the British Government of India could, in 1864, have provided a detailed account of the Ladakh–Tibet boundary southwards from the Changchenmo valley and Panggong lake. The Government could not, however, at that time have defined the boundary northwards from the Changchenmo beyond stating that the Karakoram Pass had in the past been considered to mark a fixed point on the southern edge of Chinese Turkestan. But in 1864 Chinese Turkestan was no longer Chinese: and this fact, more than any other perhaps, contributed to the evolution of the northern and north-eastern boundaries of Kashmir.

The Changchenmo–Panggong region

The distinction between the boundaries to the north and to the south of the Changchenmo is of crucial importance to any objective interpretation of the present dispute in the Western Sector. South of the Changchenmo and the Panggong lake the area between the two claim lines is fairly small. North of the Panggong lake and the Changchenmo the area under dispute amounts to possibly more than 15,000 square miles. The Changchenmo–Panggong region marks the hinge-point on which these two divergent claim lines swing. Unfortunately the situation is complicated by the failure of the Indian and Chinese sides to share quite the same hinge. The Indian line is firmly anchored to the Lanak Pass at the extreme

eastern end of the Changchenmo valley; and as a fixed point in boundary discussions this has a very great deal to recommend it. The British, in August 1947, would, it is certain, never have contemplated its abandonment. The Chinese anchor, dictated as much by geographical factors arising from the course of their claim line south-east from the Karakoram Pass as by anything else, would appear to be by the Ane Pass, just north of the central point of the western half of Panggong lake.

This divergence of fixed points brings the entire eastern half of the Changchenmo valley into dispute, and here there ought to be no dispute. No one would describe the Changchenmo valley as a densely populated region. The eastern half was, during the nineteenth century at any rate, only occupied seasonally by nomads who mainly originated from Tibetan territory and who regarded this region as their traditional grazing and camping ground.[1] However, by 1864, the whole Changchenmo valley seems to have come under the *effective* control of the Kashmir Durbar, who were beginning to open up trade routes through it and who were issuing permission for the subjects of British India to visit it. By the end of British rule in India the Changchenmo valley was as clearly a

[1] Nomads alone can find much value in the wastes of north-eastern Ladakh; and doubtless the region was visited from time to time by nomads originating from Tibet, Chinese Turkestan, and Ladakh itself. The Chinese, it seems, base much of their claim to the Aksai Chin region on these nomad activities. I do not suggest that in boundary-making nomad claims should be disregarded completely; but it is worth noting that elsewhere in nomad country such claims would effectively preclude the definition of any boundary at all. Modern politics has much hampered the freedom of nomad movement; but until recently tribes wandered between Russia and Iran, Russia and Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, Iraq and Jordan, and so on, in every case crossing international boundaries. In most cases the best that the nomad can hope for in modern boundary-making is some treaty provision guaranteeing him where possible physical access to his traditional grazing lands; but he can hardly expect, if other considerations dictate differently, to have all this pasture under his own political control.

part of the Indian Empire as some of the border tracts on the Seistan–Baluchistan boundary, for example; and no responsible British authority, provided it had the means to defend it, could have been expected to surrender any part of this valley.

North of the Changchenmo valley the situation alters. Here, in what has come to be known as Aksai Chin (though this term should properly be limited to the extreme north-east portion of the tract in question), is the mountain equivalent of the kind of desert country which leads the modern boundary maker to draw those arbitrary lines which make the present map of the Saudi Arabia–Iraq frontier so strange with its neat lozenges of Neutral Zones and the rest. Adjustments of boundary lines in desert areas are far easier to accomplish than in regions of significant population: they can be based on strategic and economic considerations without undue deference to the dictates of tradition and ethnology. But desert boundary adjustments, like any other changes in alignment, require an agreed starting-point; and this the Changchenmo dispute effectively denies at present.

At the time of the 1846 and 1847 Boundary Commissions no European travellers had actually visited the Aksai Chin region (in its widest sense). Moorcroft and Vigne, however, had implicitly commented on its existence when they discussed the secret, and Chinese-forbidden, routes to Chinese Turkestan which lay to the east of the Karakoram Pass. Dr Thomson, who was the first Englishman to visit that pass—an 18,000-foot high obstacle astride one of the ancient routes between India and Central Asia—observed to its south-east what are now called the Depsang Plains, the extreme western edge of the desolate wasteland of the northern Tibetan plateau.[2] The first Europeans to

[2] Moorcroft & Trebeck (1841); Vigne (1844); Thomson, in *JRGS* (1849), pp. 27–9, for his impressions of the Depsang Plains which he saw

travel in this area seem to have been the Schlagintweit brothers, Hermann, Adolphe, and Robert, who explored the neighbourhood of the Karakoram Pass in 1856–7. Adolphe Schlagintweit ventured far beyond the Indian northern border, and in August 1857 was murdered at Kashgar. The two surviving brothers subsequently published a bulky account of their adventures, in which they refer to what is now called the Aksai Chin region as being in 'Turkistan'.[3]

Kashmir and the Shahidulla fort

With the rebellion in Chinese Turkestan, the Karakoram Pass and its neighbourhood assumed a new political importance. The Maharaja of Kashmir saw an opportunity for the extension of his political influence, as well as a chance to acquire a greater grip on the trade between India and Eastern Turkestan. In 1865 he sent a small body of troops across the Karakoram Pass to Shahidulla on the northern side, on the bank of the lower Karakash river, where they built a fort. The garrison here consisted of no more than 25 Kashmir sepoys aided by some 50 men recruited from the local Kirghiz nomads. Their proclaimed objective, and one for which valid arguments could be made, was to protect the caravans which plied between Yarkand and Leh from attack by the Kanjut raiders of Hunza. The Shahidulla fort was abandoned by Kashmir in 1867, and never reoccupied by troops from the south of the Karakoram Pass; yet its brief life provided the basis for claims to sovereignty far to the north of the

in September 1848. A modern Italian explorer expresses this point well when he refers to 'The Depsang Plateau, the beginning of Great Tibet, with its endless, desolate plains nearly 16,500 feet high, which form the vast roof of the world' (Dainelli (1933), p. 202).

[3] See Schlagintweit (1861–6), i. 24–65; iii. 32, 64, 118.

Karakoram range, claims which are still enshrined in some of the most modern maps.[4]

The Kashmir advance in 1865 was, it would seem, a clear breach of the treaty of Amritsar of 1846, in Article IV of which Gulab Singh promised the Government of India that he would not embark on unauthorized adventures beyond his then boundaries.[5] The British at that time did not protest officially against his action which suited well enough the policy they were in the process of evolving for the opening up of trade routes between British India and Central Asia. By 1885, however, the Indian Government had resolved to oppose any attempts by the Kashmir Durbar to revive its claims over Shahidulla because, as Ney Elias, a British officer then on special mission to Kashgaria, noted, 'there is nothing beyond the . . . [Karakoram] Pass that the Kashmiris can, with advantage, interfere with'. In 1888, and again in 1892, the Government of India firmly told the Kashmir Durbar that Shahidulla must be considered to lie in Chinese territory.[6]

The British and Eastern Turkestan

The 1860s saw a great increase of interest in Britain in the possibilities of trade with the Chinese interior. The

[4] See Johnson, in *JRGS* (1967), p. 12 & Thorp (1870), pp. 70–1. A map showing the Kashmir claim, more or less, as it was established at this time, is *Asia 1:1,000,000 Sheet NJ 44*, printed by the Army Map Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1954. The British-produced sheets in this series, perhaps wisely, now show no boundary line at all.

[5] The article reads: 'The Limits to the territories of Maharajah Gulab Singh shall not at any time be changed without concurrence of the British Government.' Kashmir did not seek British permission for the Shahidulla venture. It may, perhaps, be argued that by showing on British maps Shahidulla as within the Maharaja's territory the British had at least given their tacit consent.

[6] I.O., *Political External Files*, Paper no. 1227 of 1907, Dane to Ritchie 4 July 1907 enclosing 'Note on the History of the Boundary of Kashmir between Ladak and Kashgaria'.

decade opened with the establishment of a British Legation at Peking. It seemed that direct relations with the Chinese capital, avoiding the Canton bottleneck which has already been noted in connexion with the 1846 and 1847 Boundary Commissions, might lead to the relaxing of the Chinese policy of exclusion which, hitherto, appeared to have kept foreigners from profitable enterprise in Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. From this period it is possible to trace a series of British attempts to open Tibet which were to culminate in the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa of 1904. As far as Eastern Turkestan was concerned, no sooner had the British resolved to use their new representation at Peking to secure a Chinese relaxation of the prohibition of trade and travel in this area,[7] than the Chinese lost control of it to the Moslem rebels. In Eastern Turkestan, therefore, the British decided, by the end of the decade, to open relations with the new power, the state which had been built by the adventurer Yakub Bey.

Whether Eastern Turkestan was independent or Chinese, one fact was clear to the British Government. Trade with it from British India would probably have to be carried through Kashmir territory. The possibility of bypassing Kashmir was, of course, explored, but at this period there were insuperable obstacles in the way of other routes. Kashmir, it was found, was in the habit of charging vexatious duties on all goods passing through it. This made trade unprofitable and struck a fatal blow at British attempts to develop fairs on their own territory

[7] In 1860 or 1861 the Punjab Government of Sir Robert Montgomery ordered a detailed investigation of the possibilities of trade between India and Central Asia. The result was R. H. Davies, *Report on the Trade of Central Asia*, 1862 (laid before Parliament in 1864 and bound in *Accounts and Papers*, 1864 xlii f. 397). On p. 36 of the *Report* Davies advises that the British Minister at Peking be asked to approach the Chinese Government with a view to an improvement in trading conditions in Chinese Turkestan.

whither they hoped to tempt Central Asian merchants to come and meet the traders of the Indian plains.[8] Accordingly, in 1864 the Kashmir authorities were persuaded to modify their transit dues, and in 1867 a British official was stationed at Leh in Ladakh, a strategic point on the trade route, partly to see that the Kashmiris kept to their bargain, and partly to investigate ways of improving on the arduous road between Ladakh and Yarkand by the high and difficult Karakoram Pass. The result, in the late 1860s, was the discovery of routes to the east of the pass. These all started in the region of the Changchenmo valley and then crossed to wastes of the Aksai Chin area till they came to upper reaches of the Karakash river which provided a relatively easy way down from the Tibetan plateau through the mountains of the Kunlun range. They were all somewhat longer than the Karakoram Pass route, and, for this among other reasons, they turned out to be of very short-lived popularity.

The new trade routes were advocated by a small group of men, such as R. B. Shaw, who was then an Indian tea planter, Dr Cayley, who was the first British officer to be stationed at Ladakh, Douglas Forsyth, who was a British official of some seniority and who was to pave the way diplomatically for this venture in Central Asia trade and politics, and G. W. Hayward, a private traveller who was one of the first Englishmen to visit Kashgar and Yarkand, and whose writings gave publicity to the relative ease of the new routes. Diplomatically, by 1870 the Maharaja of Kashmir had been persuaded to accept some responsibility for the development of these routes, and to act in this respect jointly with a British Trade Commissioner at

[8] The fair at Palampur in the Kangra valley was at one time in the late 1860s a source of much British optimism. However, even without troubles from Kashmir, the very distance which separated this place from Yarkand, more than 1,000 miles over mountain country, doomed it to failure.

Leh. In 1870 and 1873 Forsyth headed embassies to Yakub Bey, now the sole ruler of Kashgaria; and in 1874 there resulted an Anglo-Kashgarian commercial treaty which gave to the British what, it was discovered with some alarm in Calcutta and London, the Russians had already obtained, freedom to trade and low duties. In the 1870s, so promising did all this seem, British capital actually entered the field of Central Asian commerce with the formation of the Central Asian Trading Company, one of the more imaginative of British mercantile ventures in the Victorian age.[9]

British policy in Eastern Turkestan forms an important element in the history of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia, and as such, is outside the scope of this essay. From the boundary point of view, however, all this activity meant that the British began to see as 'red on the map' all the country traversed by the new trade routes up to the point where clear evidence of the sovereignty of Yakub Bey was reached. Yakub Bey, a newly established ruler, had too many internal problems to worry excessively about the precise alignment of his external boundaries. The effective Kashmir–Yakub Bey boundary post came to be regarded as Shahidulla, well north of that point on the Karakoram Pass noted as the boundary in Moorcroft's day and in the time of the 1846 and 1847 Boundary Commissions. British maps began to indicate this advance, adopting the boundary line suggested by W. H. Johnson[10] as a result of his survey north of the Karakoram Pass in 1864 and his traverse of Aksai Chin in 1865, when he made his way in circumstances which are still a trifle obscure to the Central Asian city of Khotan.

[9] See Lattimore (1952), ch. ii; Frechtling, in *J. Central As. Soc.* (1939). I have attempted a detailed treatment of British relations with Chinese Turkestan in a forthcoming volume of my *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*.

[10] For more about Johnson and his map see above, pp. 43–4.

The Johnson boundary

The ruler of Khotan when Johnson visited the city was one Haji Habibulla Khan,[11] an old man much alarmed at the chaos into which Eastern Turkestan had fallen of late, and terrified of conquest by Yakub Bey (and rightly so, in view of his nasty death at Yakub Bey's hands in the following year). Haji Habibulla, it seems, in 1864 and 1865 was also taking an interest in Aksai Chin as a means of access to the south for his threatened little kingdom. He had, it would appear, first explored the possibilities of a more easterly route, passing outside what India now claims, but had been rebuffed by the hostility of Tibetan nomads. In the Aksai Chin region he constructed a number of stone shelters (*langar*), and one of these was Haji Langar on the Karakash, a spot named after Haji Habibulla Khan which now lies just within the Indian claim line. He built another *langar* just on the southern side of the Khitai Pass, also within the present Indian claim line and over which the modern Sinkiang–Tibet motor road is said to run.

The Johnson boundary alignment for the Aksai Chin area coincides very closely with that claimed in 1865 by the Kashmir Government. Extending far north of the Karakoram Pass as it does, the Indian side today would hardly claim it to be a 'traditional' line. There are, indeed, some reasons for thinking that what Johnson marked on his map on his return from Khotan was not unconnected with the policy of Kashmir. Johnson was severely reprimanded by the British Government for crossing into Khotan without permission, and felt obliged to resign from the Indian Survey. Soon afterwards (1872) the Kashmir Durbar hired him as their *Wazir*, or Governor,

[11] For Habibulla Khan's ambitions see Trotter, in *JRGS* (1878), p. 185. For the construction of Haji Langar see ibid. p. 28. For the *langar* near the Khitai Pass see Stein (1912), pp. 469–72.

of Ladakh. This does not mean, of course, that Johnson was acting in collusion with Kashmir, but merely that as one much opposed to the 'masterly inactivity' on the frontiers of Lawrence's Administration of British India, he may well have felt it his patriotic duty to lend cartographical support to Kashmir's forward claims. Johnson, in a very real sense, was a political surveyor. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that the Johnson boundary, modified as time went on by more accurate surveys, dominated British maps for many years to come.[12]

Not all British observers at this time accepted the Johnson boundary in its entirety. Dr Henderson, who accompanied Forsyth in his first mission to Eastern Turkestan in 1870, which took a route across the Aksai Chin area, described his journey from Leh to the Changchenmo valley as being 'the Ladak portion of our route' because the country north of the Changchenmo 'being desert and uninhabited, can hardly be said to belong to anyone; I have therefore distinguished it as the Desert': and so he marked it on his map.[13] R. B. Shaw, who had visited Eastern Turkestan in a private capacity in 1868–9, and who in 1870 was one of the official members of the first Forsyth Mission, had this to say about Shahidulla, which was included within the Johnson boundary of Kashmir:

> there is no village; it is merely a camping-ground on the regular old trade route between Ladak and Yarkand. . . . Four years ago . . . [1864 or 1865] . . ., while the troubles were still going on in Toorkistan, the Maharaja of Cashmere sent a few soldiers and workmen across the Karakoram range (his real boundary), and built a small fort at Shahidoolla; but last year, when matters became settled, and the whole

[12] For much correspondence relating to Johnson and other questions of trade routes north from Kashmir, see I.O., *Collections to Pol. Despatches to India*, vol. 91, no. 93 and vol. 93, nos. 178, 182.

[13] Henderson & Hume (1873), p. 62.

> country united under the King of Yarkand, these troops were withdrawn. In reality the Maharaja has no more rights in Shahidoolla than I have. He has never had any rights on a river which flows northward through Toorkistan, nor over pastures of the Kirghiz, who pay taxes to Yarkand. It is the more astonishing that our recent maps have given effect to his now abandoned claim, and have included within his frontier a tract where he does not possess a square yard of ground, and whose only inhabitants are the subjects of another state.[14]

G. W. Hayward, writing shortly before his murder in 1870, also had occasion to refer to the peculiarities of the Johnson boundary. Hayward, who travelled in Kashgaria at the same time as Shaw, in 1868–9, but quite independently, was no official. He was, however, a careful observer, though no lover of the Kashmir Government which, there is reason to believe, played a part in his murder by the people of Yasin, between Kashmir and Hunza. Hayward wrote as follows:

> The Maharaja of Kashmir, it is believed, considered his territory to extend up to the Kilian Range, north of Shadula, doubtless from the fact of his having had a fort built there; but the last habitation now met with in his territory is at the head of the Nubra valley, in Ladak. The boundary line is given on the latest map of Turkistan as extending up to Kathaitum in the Kilian Valley; but not only this valley, but the valleys of the Yarkand and Karakash rivers are frequented by the Kirghiz who all pay tribute to the ruler of Turkistan.
>
> The natural boundary of Eastern Turkistan to the south is the main chain of the Karakoram; and the line extending along the east of this range, from the Muztagh to the Karakoram, and from the Karakoram to the Changchenmo passes, may be definitely fixed in its geographical and political bearing as constituting the limit of the Maharaja of Kashmir's dominions to the north.[15]

[14] Shaw (1871), p. 107.

[15] Hayward, in *JRGS* (1870), p. 49.

Even Douglas Forsyth, definitely a man of the forward school, had his doubts about the Johnson boundary. On the *Preliminary Map of Eastern Turkestan to illustrate the reports on Sir Douglas Forsyth's Mission to Kashgar, 1873–4*, compiled by Captain H. Trotter and published by the G.T. Survey of India, January 1875, Forsyth noted in his own hand (see the copy in the India Office Library Map Room, cat. no. F/XV/8) that 'the boundaries laid down on this map are approximate only, and are not to be considered authoritative'.

The general impression to be derived from the various sources which have been quoted above is that, as in the days of the 1846 and 1847 Boundary Commissions, no very clear picture had been established of the exact boundary alignment of the north-eastern parts of Kashmir; but that such a boundary would, were it ever carefully demarcated on the ground, run roughly north-west from the Changchenmo valley to the Karakoram Pass. It would not touch the Karakash river, and it would exclude from Kashmir the region of Aksai Chin. A map with just this boundary alignment was provided for the Foreign Office in London by Trelawney Saunders, the cartographical expert of that time at the India Office, on 10 June 1873 (Map 9). This particular map satisfies the main criterion which I have suggested for the assessment of the evidence of maps, namely relevance, in that on this occasion the Foreign Office, with Russian expansion in mind, was specifically concerned with the Kashgaria and Tibet borders of Kashmir.[16]

By 1875, in fact, there were two Aksai Chin boundaries. On the one hand, there was what might be called the documented boundary, the alignment based on history and tradition in so far as British observers then understood

[16] This document may be seen in the Public Record Office, London (FO/65/875).

these complex topics.[17] On the other hand, there was the 'Johnson boundary', an alignment representing the recently evolved political pretensions of the Kashmir Durbar, and which was convenient to the British as a basis for future discussions, should the need for these arise, over the status of the new trade routes to Eastern Turkestan by way of the Changchenmo and Aksai Chin. In the event, as will be seen, the new trade routes had virtually died out by the late 1870s; and British interest in Aksai Chin was based solely on considerations of policy and strategy. In these circumstances the Aksai Chin boundary alignment, as far as the British were concerned, acquired a certain flexibility, distorted this way and that by shifts and changes in the course of British relations with China and Russia.

[17] This alignment was repeated by the Government of India in 1891. In a dispatch to the Home Government of 11 March 1891 Lord Lansdowne 'enclosed a map which showed the Karakoram Pass as on the border, which from that point ran south and south-east so as to give the whole of the Lingzi Thang Plains to China' (see I.O., *Pol. External Files*, Paper No. 1227 of 1907, Dane to Ritchie, 4 July 1907, encl. 'Note on the History of the Boundary of Kashmir between Ladak and Kashgaria').

7

Hunza, the Pamirs, and Aksai Chin in 1912

CONCERN among British observers as to the rights of Kashmir in Aksai Chin and across the Karakoram Pass, however, did not long linger. Men such as Hayward and Shaw had had no particular love for the Kashmir Government, and had seen no reason why it should be allowed an inch more territory than that to which it was entitled. The next generation took a more tolerant view of the situation. By the 1880s Yakub Bey had gone and China had retaken Eastern Turkestan, which she now called (as it will be called here) Sinkiang. The Russians had embarked on their final gallop into Central Asia with the Pamirs as their goal. In these circumstances the limits of Sinkiang, both on the side of Kashmir and that of Russian or potential Russian territory, became of some strategic importance to British India. The boundary question, indeed, had now become part of the 'Great Game' with which readers of Kipling's *Kim* will be familiar. In the 'Great Game' the Maharaja of Kashmir was turned into a most valued British weapon. This development may conveniently be dated to the opening of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration in 1876.

The Russian threat

The problem of the Northern Frontier (as opposed to the North West Frontier) at this time is easily stated.

Between the Russian advance and British India, lay, first, a barrier of Chinese territory in Sinkiang, and, second, behind Sinkiang, the last line of defence consisting of Kashmir and the territories to Kashmir's north-west, such as Yasin, Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, and Chitral. Some of these were by the 1870s nominally subordinate to Kashmir, and some possessed complex and little-understood relationships with Afghanistan and other neighbouring districts. Here, from the British point of view, the boundaries were disturbingly undefined. The precise limits of Afghanistan were not known; nor was the exact extent of Sinkiang both to the south-west and the west. Should the rate of Russian advance accelerate, there was a real danger that the Russians would be able to drive a wedge into this area of uncertainty before the British could get defined a frontier which placed in their possession the key passes across the mountains of the Karakoram, Pamirs, and Hindu Kush, which all meet in this remote corner of the world in what is sometimes aptly described as the Pamir Knot. Some eccentric British military strategists, such as General Macgregor,[1] thought that over these passes would pour great armies of Cossacks to invade Hindustan, as had once Babur and Mahmud of Ghazni. The majority of responsible British thinkers held no such views; but they believed, unanimously, that the presence of Russia in close proximity to the vast population of British India would have a politically disturbing effect. They also saw that Russia, in command of these passes, could use the *threat* of invasion to force the British either to increase their military establishment in India, and thus

[1] Macgregor (1884). This work was frowned upon by the Government of India, and its circulation was private. It had some influence over young British officers, and it was, it seems, widely read in Russia where it was regarded as an official statement of British policy. It has been suggested that Macgregor's book contributed much to the aggressive attitude of Russian officers on the Central Asian frontier in the 1880s and 1890s.

diminish their power elsewhere, or, rather than face the expense of such a martial posture, to negotiate peace on the Indian frontier in return for concessions in areas of major Russian interest, such as the Straits between Asiatic and European Turkey, or the Balkans.

To counter this Russian threat, the British had a number of courses open to them. They could attempt, by direct Anglo-Russian negotiation, to secure a firm limit to the sphere of Russian expansion. They could advance their own sovereignty towards the Pamir Knot. They could see that regions such as Afghanistan had, as quickly as possible, properly defined borders. They could give support to the Chinese in Sinkiang, thus ensuring that a Chinese buffer of the greatest possible extent existed between them and Russia. All these things, between 1876 and 1895, they attempted to do; and to describe their actions would require a book of some considerable length.[2] Only a brief summary will be attempted here.

Using the claims of Kashmir, the British under Lytton and his successors (except, perhaps, Lord Ripon) pushed forward the effective British boundary into Gilgit, Hunza, Nagar, and Chitral. Kashmir, in this respect, served as a smoke-screen behind which the Government of India could hide from the eagle eyes of Mr Gladstone and other members of his party. By these means Gilgit was secured by 1888, by 1892 Hunza and Nagar were safe, and by 1895 the status of Chitral was established to British satisfaction. At the same time, in order to keep Kashmir under some control and in order to obtain accurate geographical and political information about the frontier regions, the

[2] The best detailed study of this topic so far available is G. J. Alder, 'British Policy on the "Roof of the World", with special reference to the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1895', unpub. Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the University of Bristol in 1959. I intend to discuss these questions in a forthcoming volume of my *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*. References to sources will be then made in full.

Indian Government encouraged from the late 1880s onwards a number of enterprising young British officers to wander into the remote corners of Central Asia. Francis Younghusband, later to lead a British army to Lhasa, was one of these men. Of course, the Russians were also busy exploring, and the meetings on the roof of the world of Russian and British adventurers provided the Central Asian equivalent of the Fashoda incident in Africa. Younghusband against Grombtchevsky, Yonoff against Younghusband, these encounters had their echoes in Whitehall and St Petersburg.

Afghanistan

One key element in this contest was Afghanistan. The Indo-Afghan boundary was accordingly defined to British taste by the Durand Mission to Kabul of 1893; and in 1895, after arguments which can be traced back to 1869, the effective Russo-Afghan boundary at its approaches to the region where, as one writer of those times said, 'three Empires meet', was first defined on paper and then demarcated on the ground. The result was the creation of the Wakhan Tract, a thin strip of Afghanistan separating the British and Russian Empires by in places no more than ten miles of mountain. This rather artificial Afghan barrier, however, was of little utility if it could be outflanked. Hence the importance of Chinese Turkestan.

Chinese Turkestan

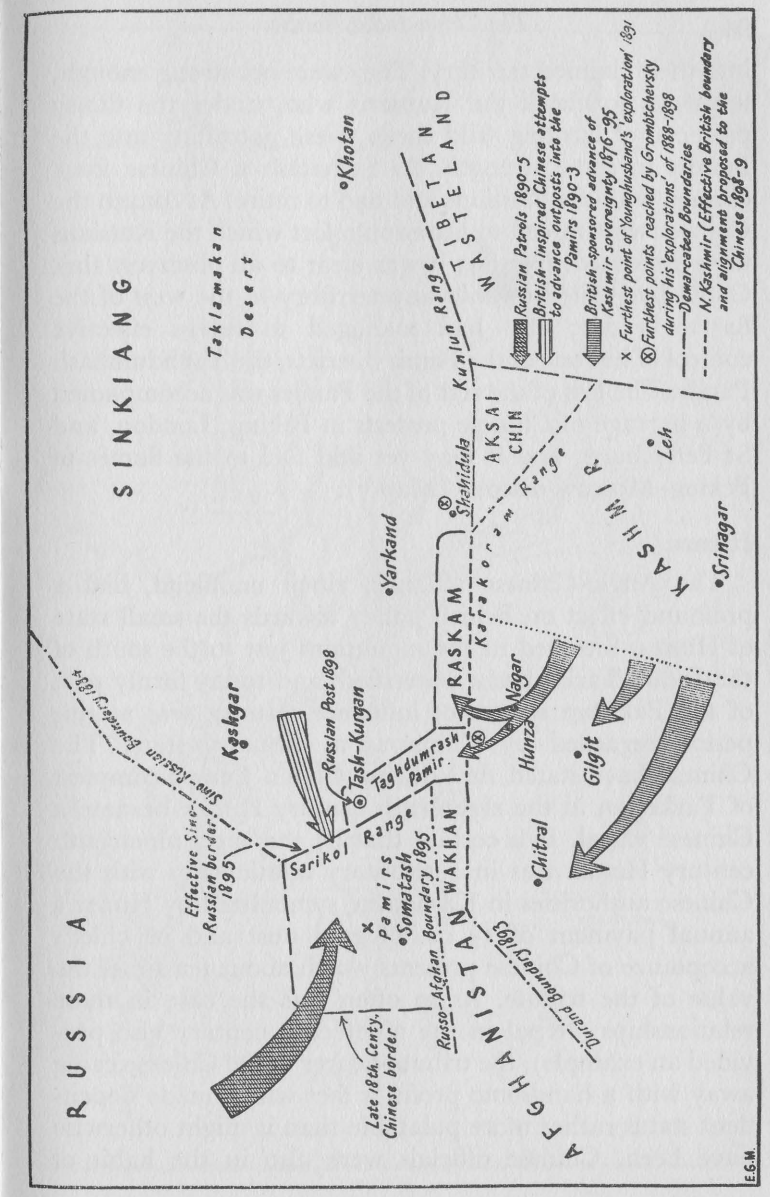
During the four years of negotiations which culminated in the Anglo-Russian Pamirs Agreement of 1895, the boundary on the western edge of Sinkiang was just as much at issue as the Russo-Afghan border. From 1890 a British official was stationed at Kashgar, initially Francis Younghusband, and then from 1891 until his retirement at the end of the First World War, George Macartney.

The main function of this post was to combat Russian influence, and, prior to the Pamirs Agreement, to try to persuade the Chinese in Sinkiang to push their outposts in the Pamirs as far west as possible. At one time the British clearly hoped that the outcome would be a single tripartite conference which would settle all the boundaries in this region, Russo-Afghan, Russo-Chinese, and Anglo-Chinese, at one stroke. The conference never materialized, but the British did not quite abandon hope that it would one day. Up to the signing of the Anglo-Russian Pamirs Agreement in 1895, the British looked on the Chinese more or less as their allies.

The Chinese, following Tso Tsang-t'ang's reconquest of Turkestan in the 1870s, were endeavouring to re-establish those frontiers which they had held in the days of the great Emperor Ch'ien Lung in the eighteenth century. This meant, as the Chinese authorities in Sinkiang were saying by 1890, that Chinese sovereignty ran right up to the crest of the Karakoram range. It also meant that Chinese rule extended westwards into the Pamirs, at least as far as Somatash where Ch'ien Lung had erected his inscription. The British, in this period of Anglo-Chinese co-operation in Central Asia, were well disposed towards the Karakoram boundary provided that China could indeed make it effective. The pressure of reorganizing Sinkiang has not given her the opportunity to do so before 1890; but at that time, with the construction of a frontier guard post at Suget, south of Shahidulla on the road to the Karakoram Pass, the Chinese seemed on the way to creating a sufficiently clear sovereignty so as to preclude Russian infiltration here. This was the main British objective.

The Pamirs

In the Pamirs the Chinese, encouraged by Younghusband and Macartney, pushed westward small posts

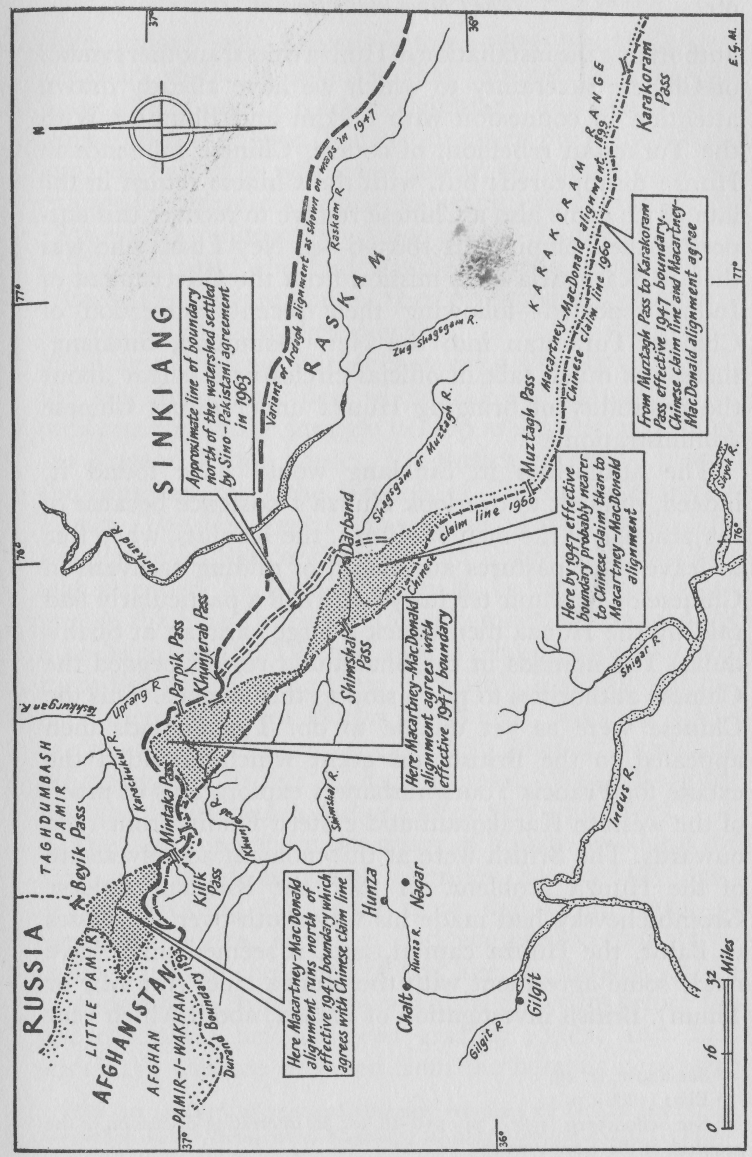


MAP 7. SCHEMATIC PLAN SHOWING BOUNDARIES IN THE PAMIRS 1888–1898

into their claimed territory. They were not strong enough, however, to check the Russians who, under the flimsy pretence of hunting wild sheep, were patrolling into the Pamirs in some strength. At Somatash a Chinese force clashed with the Russians and had to retire. At Aktash the Chinese were forced to abandon a fort which the Russians then destroyed. By 1893 it was clear to all observers that China had failed to hold any territory to the west of the Sarikol range, and had managed to retain effective control of but one of the Pamir districts, the Taghdumbash Pamir. The loss of the rest of the Pamirs was accompanied by a barrage of Chinese protests in Peking, London, and St Petersburg; and it may yet add fuel to the flames of Peking–Moscow discord (Map 7).

Hunza

The Anglo-Chinese alliance, albeit unofficial, had a profound effect on British policy towards the small state of Hunza. Situated in the mountains just to the south of the Indus–Tarim basin watershed, and today firmly part of the Pakistan sphere of influence, Hunza was at this period regarded by China as a tributary state. The Chinese have stated that during Ch'ien Lung's conquest of Turkestan in the eighteenth century Hunza became a Chinese vassal. It is certain that by the early nineteenth century Hunza was in a tributary relationship with the Chinese authorities in Kashgaria, symbolized by Hunza's annual payment of 1½ oz. of gold dust and its chief's acceptance of Chinese presents worth about ten times the value of the tribute. As so often was the case in these relationships (Nepal in the nineteenth century also provided an example), the tribute-bearer to the Chinese came away with a handsome profit, a fact which made dependent status rather more palatable than it might otherwise have been. Chinese officials were also in the habit of



MAP 8. HUNZA–SINKIANG BOUNDARY

authorizing the installation of Hunza rulers, another symbol of Chinese suzerainty to which we have already drawn attention in connexion with Sikkim and Bhutan.[3] With the Turkestan rebellion, of course, Chinese influence in Hunza disappeared; but, with the Chinese return in the late 1870s came also a Chinese resolve to recover this outpost of their empire. In 1885–6—so Ney Elias, who was then in Kashgaria on a mission from the Government of India, reported—following their recent conversion of Chinese Turkestan into the New Dominion, Sinkiang, there was much talk in official circles in Kashgar about the possibility of bringing Hunza under direct Chinese administration.[4]

The authorities in Sinkiang would have found it, indeed, difficult to overlook Hunza's existence because of the practice of the men of Hunza, the Kanjuts, when free to leave their pastures and fields, of raiding caravans in Chinese or Kashmir territory.[5] In 1888 a particularly bad raid by the Hunza men struck a large caravan at Shahidulla. The nomads in the Shahidulla region begged the Chinese authorities to put a stop to this menace. This the Chinese were as yet unable to do. The nomads then appealed to the British, an event which provided the excuse for Francis Younghusband's explorations of much of the western Karakoram and eastern Pamirs from 1889 onwards. The British were at this moment acutely aware of the Hunza problem. In 1888 the Russian explorer Grombtchevsky had made his way south over the passes to Baltit, the Hunza capital, and, it seemed, may have made some agreement with the Hunza chief (the Mir or Thum). British investigation of Hunza, about which very

[3] See above, p. 29.

[4] Elias (1886), p. 7.

[5] See Schomberg (1936), pp. 210–18, for an interesting discussion of the problem of the Kanjut raids.

little indeed was known before 1885 when Colonel Lockhart visited it, revealed that this state was also, in name at any rate, a Kashmir tributary, and had been so from at least the 1860s. The British solved the Hunza problem, and that of its neighbour Nagar, by helping Kashmir enforce its suzerainty, a process which was completed by 1892 with a military expedition and a change of ruler.

The Chinese, who had watched British operations in Hunza with close attention, then protested in Peking and in London at what they described as British occupation of Chinese territory. Rather than risk a frontier crisis with the Sinkiang authorities, whose aid was thought to be indispensable in the struggle to keep as far west as possible the Russian Pamir border, the British agreed to permit the continuance of the symbols of Chinese influence in Hunza. The Mir went on paying his 1½ oz. of gold. The installation in 1892 of the new, and British-favoured, Mir was attended by Chinese officials. In fact, the British treated the Sino-Hunza relationship much as they had the Sino-Nepalese and Tibeto-Ladakhi relationships, ignoring them but not stopping them. Certainly Kashmir did not for a moment accept Hunza as Chinese; but then Kashmir's hold over Hunza was extremely tenuous, depending ultimately on British military support. What Kashmir thought about Hunza did not seem very important.[6]

The logical northern boundary of Hunza lay along the main watershed, to which attention has already been drawn, dividing the Indus from the Tarim basin of Sinkiang. Hunza, however, had acquired certain territorial claims to the north of this line. In Sarikol, or the Taghdumbash Pamir, Hunza had in the years before the rise of Yakub Bey acquired grazing rights; and dues which the Chinese collected from the nomads here were

[6] For an account of the early foreign relations of Hunza see A. H. McMahon to the Resident in Kashmir, 10 May 1898, in FO/17/1362.

sent on to the Mir. These rights fell into abeyance during the Yakub Bey period. With the return of the Chinese they were revived. Similarly, on the upper valleys of the Raskam river, a major tributary of the Yarkand river in Sinkiang, the Mir possessed certain rights of cultivation which he valued as this was the only direction in which he could expand his territory to accommodate any population increase: to the south he was effectively hemmed in by other states.

The question of these rights in Raskam and the Taghdumbash Pamir is a complicated one, and several interpretations of their constitutional nature exist. To the British, at any rate, these rights gave a territorial claim, albeit shadowy, to the north of the Indus–Tarim Basin watershed, a claim which is still marked on many modern maps. The British never, in the 1890s or later, actually administered north of the watershed, though during the First World War they kept a small military post in the Taghdumbash Pamir. Nor did the Mir, in fact, administer on his own behalf in the Taghdumbash Pamir: he merely accepted revenue from it which the Chinese sent him. In Raskam he kept up a token cultivation of some fields just to the north of the watershed line. The Chinese regarded these rights to the north of the watershed as part and parcel of the tributary status of Hunza; and when, later on, the British made tentative steps towards ending Hunza's Chinese dependence, the Kashgar authorities countered with moves to deprive the Mir of his interests in Raskam and the Taghdumbash Pamir. The issue was one of prestige and 'face', as there will be occasion to describe a little later on.

The northern Kashmir border

With the Chinese failure to hold a line in the western Pamirs, the Sinkiang buffer seemed rather less secure than

at one time the British hoped it would be. The defeat of China by Japan in 1895 served further to dispel illusions as to the realities of Chinese power. No sooner had the Pamirs Agreement of 1895, with its defined Russo-Afghan border, seemed to have secured one section of the British flank than another section, the northern Kashmir border, appeared vulnerable. By late 1895 the Government of India had concluded that China might not be able to hold on to its remaining Pamir district in the face of Russian pressure. This would mean the end of the British hope of maintaining a buffer of Afghan and Chinese territory between India and Russia; and in these circumstances it was all the more necessary to obtain a properly defined border between British territory and Chinese Turkestan. As Lord Elgin's Government noted in September 1895:

> Recent reports . . . emphasize the possibility that Sarikul and Raskam may at a not far distant date pass into the possession of Russia, who might then, unless the Taghdumbash were protected, overlap the boundary just demarcated [by the Anglo-Russian Pamirs Boundary Commission]. . . . The present moment, when it may be possible to obtain concessions from China on account of her Treaty with France regarding trans-Mekong territory, appears favourable for settling the Chinese boundary with Kashmir, Hunza and Afghanistan, and we invite earnest attention to the possibility of effecting an arrangement whereby a definite limit would be placed to possible extensions of Russian territory towards the Mustagh and Karakoram mountains, should that Power succeed China in the possession of the tracts referred to.[7]

No one in England disagreed with the basic premises behind this proposal. At issue only was the exact alignment which the boundary in question should follow. Two schools of thought immediately developed, the moderate

[7] Elgin to Hamilton, no. 186 of 25 Sept. 1895, in FO/17/1255.

and the forward schools; and the arguments of both must be considered.

The Macartney–MacDonald line

The moderates were represented by Lord Elgin's Indian Administration, relying very much on the advice of George Macartney, British representative in Kashgar. Macartney was himself half-Chinese. His father, Sir Halliday Macartney, was adviser to the Chinese Legation in London. George Macartney spoke fluent Chinese, was deeply versed in Chinese ways of thought, and, of all the British diplomatists who dealt with China in the nineteenth century, there can have been none who managed more successfully to combine a deep loyalty to Britain with a genuine sympathy for, and understanding of, Chinese aims and ambitions. Alone in Kashgar, without at first official status and with no escort or other visible trappings of power, Macartney from 1890 until his retirement in 1918 virtually staved off the complete domination of Sinkiang by Russia. When consulted, he proposed that China should be asked to accept none of the preposterous claims of the Maharaja of Kashmir over territory to the north of the Karakoram Pass. The Kashmir claims, like those of Hunza in Raskam and the Taghdumbash Pamir, should be pointed out to the Chinese and then waived. Perhaps, in return, China should be asked to surrender any rights she might feel she still possessed in Hunza. Macartney proposed, as will shortly be seen, what was essentially a watershed frontier; and in the process he had to face the problem of Aksai Chin.[8]

The problem was inherent in the Chinese resolve

[8] I have throughout used the term Aksai Chin to mean the western part of Aksai Chin: as a geographical feature the Aksai Chin plains extend eastward far beyond the point where India argues her frontier lies, a fact which gave rise to some confusion during the Sino-Indian boundary discussions of 1960 and 1961.

shortly after 1890 to claim the Karakoram range as their southern boundary in Sinkiang. They made a public demonstration of this aim in 1892 when they caused to be erected a boundary pillar of stone, supporting a wooden notice, on the summit of the Karakoram Pass. The notice declared that the place was under Chinese rule. The Indian Government, when they heard of this action,

> expressed themselves in favour of the Chinese filling up the 'no-man's-land' beyond the Karakoram, as having no desire that the Kashmir Durbar should assume control over this tract, and as seeing no reason to remonstrate with the Chinese over the erection of these boundary marks, though they could not regard them as having any international value, the demarcation not having been undertaken by . . . [Britain and China] . . . jointly.[9]

By way of Macartney, however, the Chinese authorities in Sinkiang were asked to explain more clearly what their ambitions in the region of the Karakoram were; and the reply was an assertion that the northern side of the Karakoram fell within the two Chinese districts of So Che and Khotan of Sinkiang Province. Macartney then produced a map which the Chinese Minister in St Petersburg, Hung Chun, had just been using as a basis for discussion of the alignment of the Sino-Russian boundary in the Pamirs. This map, evidently copied from a Russian map,[10] showed the Sino-Indian boundary considerably to the north of the Karakoram range and clearly placed

[9] Dane to Ritchie, 4 July 1907 (see pp. 48, 79 n. 6). The Indian side have referred to this boundary marker, but have avoided stating that it was situated on the summit of the Karakoram Pass (actually 50 feet from the summit on the Ladakh side) by describing its location as '64 miles south of Suget'. On the most recent 1:1,000,000 maps the summit of the Karakoram Pass is almost exactly 60 miles as the crow flies south of Suget. This pillar, therefore, was certainly not on the Kunlun range, as G. F. Hudson, among other recent writers, has implied (see Hudson (1963), p. 15; see also *Indian Officials' Report*, p. 155).

[10] Hudson (1963), p. 16.

Aksai Chin within Kashmir territory. The Chinese seem to have appreciated some of the possible implications of Hung Chun's map.[11] They lost no time in sending a Chinese surveyor to the northern slopes of the Karakoram; and he soon produced a map showing that range as the Sino-Indian boundary and apparently including Aksai Chin, though the poor quality of the survey leaves room for doubt here, in Chinese territory.

In late 1895 or early 1896 George Macartney presented the leading Chinese official in Kashgar, the *Taotai* or Lt-Governor, with Johnston's *Atlas of India*. Map 3 of this volume, describing the Punjab and Kashmir at a scale of 1:3,225,000, shows a rather extreme version of the Johnson boundary (W. H. Johnson should not, however, be confused with the publishers of the *Atlas* in question). The *Taotai*, proud of his new possession, showed it to some members of the Russian Consulate in Kashgar, who did not hesitate to point out that Map 3 marked as British a good deal of territory in the Aksai Chin area which might properly be described as Chinese. The *Taotai* then raised the matter with Macartney who, in sympathetic investigation, concluded that the Chinese official had a point. The Aksai Chin area, he thought, being desert was really a kind of no man's land: but, if a boundary had to be drawn over or around it, then by rights half should be Chinese and half British. Macartney noted a feature of the Aksai Chin area which is shown more clearly on early maps, such as that of Drew,[12] than on modern maps such as the *Asia 1:1,000,000 Sheet NI-44 Western Tibet*, namely that what has been described here as a single geographical feature is really two such features. On the north is the Aksai Chin wasteland; on the south is the Lingzithang plateau; separating them is a line of hills running roughly

[11] For more about Hung Chun's map, see App. II, p. 181.

[12] See above, p. 44.

east–west and referred to as the Lokzhung (or Lak Tsang) range. Macartney felt that Aksai Chin proper, north of the Lokzhung range, was Chinese, while Lingzithang, south of that range, was British.[13] In the light of the present Sino-Indian dispute this is an interesting partition, since it places on the Chinese side the entire territory through which passes the Sinkiang–Tibet motor road.

In the summer of 1898 Lord Elgin's Government accepted Macartney's ideas and incorporated them in a definite proposal. The Chinese should be asked to accept a verbal definition of the northern Kashmir boundary, though physical demarcation on the ground did not seem essential and might well give rise to protracted discussions. The Hunza claims in Raskam and the Taghdumbash Pamir should be stated, but could well be waived as a concession to the Chinese. They were far less important than the securing of a firm boundary alignment. The proposed alignment Lord Elgin then outlined. Starting at a point just beyond the Russian-Afghan-Chinese (the last, of course, *de facto*) trijunction, the line was to run, though with minor deviations, along the main watershed by way of the Mustagh, Kunjerab, and Shimshal passes to the Karakoram Pass. From the Karakoram Pass eastwards the definition is worth quoting in its original form:

> From the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run nearly east for about half a degree, and then turn south to a little below the 35th parallel of North Latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga and from there, in a south-easterly direction, follows the Lak Tsung Range until that meets a spur running south from the Kuen Lun Range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° East Longitude. We regret that we have

[13] Elgin to Hamilton, no. 170 of 23 Dec. 1897 in FO/17/1356.

no map to show the whole line either accurately or on a large scale.[14]

On 14 March 1899 the description of this alignment, just as the Indian Government had phrased it (but, of course, without the regret for lack of maps), was communicated to the Tsungli Yamen, as the Chinese Department of External Affairs at Peking was then called, by the British Minister to China, Sir Claude MacDonald. MacDonald added that

> It will not be necessary to mark out the frontier. The natural frontier is the crest of a range of mighty mountains, a great part of which is quite inaccessible. It will be sufficient if the two Governments [of Great Britain and China] . . . enter into an agreement to recognise the frontier as laid down by its clearly marked geographical features.[15]

The contents of this note were communicated by Peking to the Sinkiang Provincial Government; and, in due course, the British Legation heard informally that Sinkiang had raised no objections either to the proposed alignment or to the method for its definition.[16] However, by the time that this news had been received, the British had had second thoughts on the Macartney–MacDonald alignment and were considering quite a different boundary line. Hence no efforts were made to secure a Chinese answer to Sir Claude MacDonald's note. The Chinese may now well regret that they did not depart from their usual diplomatic practice and offer a spontaneous reply. The MacDonald note, at all events, was consigned to the limbo of history; and it has only been revived in the recent boundary dispute in misquotation.[17]

[14] Elgin to Hamilton, no. 198 of 27 Oct. 1898, ibid. See also Map 6.

[15] I.O. Memo. A. 160 in *Pol. External Files*, 1912, vol. 83. For the full text of this note see App. II.

[16] Sir E. Satow to Lord Lansdowne, 3 Nov. 1903, in FO/17/1600.

[17] See Nehru to Chou En-lai, 26 Sept. 1959, in *White Paper II*, p. 36; also *Chinese Officials' Report*, pp. 16–17.

The Ardagh boundary

At the very moment when MacDonald was presenting his note to the Tsungli Yamen, the situation on the Kashmir–Sinkiang frontier was undergoing a profound change. The moderate boundary alignment was losing its attractions, and the forward line was becoming the fashion among British thinkers. The forward line was very much the same as the old Johnson boundary, but its justification lay not in that it conferred British sovereignty over the Aksai Chin trade routes but that it offered the best defence against Russian infiltration. The Aksai Chin trade routes by the 1890s had long been dead and forgotten, and the caravans between Yarkand and Leh were once more confined to the shorter but more arduous Karakoram Pass route. The forward line received its theoretical basis in the arguments of Sir John Ardagh, who was Director of British Military Intelligence in 1896 and 1897, and who produced a number of influential memoranda on the problem of the Kashmir boundary.

Ardagh's argument was as follows.[18] Since the outcome

Richardson (1962), p. 224, refers to the 1899 note as follows: 'In 1899 the Indian Government conveyed formally to the Chinese Government a description of the frontier between Kashmir and Sinkiang as running along the Kuen Lun Mountains to a point east of longitude 80°, as had been shown on Indian Survey maps for many years.' Richardson thus suggests that the line proposed in 1899 ran more or less directly east from the Karakoram Pass to the Kunlun Mountains at a point east of 80° longitude. In fact, as any who read the note carefully will see, the alignment proposed ran generally south-east from the Karakoram Pass to well below the 35th parallel, and it did not follow the Kunlun range at all: rather, at a point near 80° longitude, the alignment met a *spur running south from* the Kunlun range, which is not quite the same thing. This particular misquotation of the 1899 note has been made by many recent writers on the Sino-Indian border dispute, such as Chakravarti, Bains, and Rao. Mr Nehru made the same error in letters to Chou En-lai, and these have been repeated in numerous Indian official publications.

[18] 'The northern frontier of India from the Pamirs to Tibet', by Sir John Ardagh, 1 Jan. 1897, in FO/17/1328.

of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, no illusions could be entertained as to China's military strength. In these circumstances, given the expansive nature of Russian rule in Asia, an eventual Russian occupation of Kashgaria is 'far from improbable'. Then:

> if the eventual annexation of Kashgaria by Russia is to be expected, we may be sure that Russia, as in the past, will endeavour to push her boundary as far south as she can, for political reasons, even if no real military advantage is sought. It is evident therefore that sooner or later we shall have to conclude a definite agreement regarding the Northern Frontier of India.

From the practical considerations of administration, Ardagh continued, the British in India had come to consider a watershed line as the rational northern boundary. Unfortunately, from a military point of view the watershed line was defective. The approaches to the crest of the ranges from the south were long and difficult: from the north they were short and fairly easy. Thus, unless the British held this vulnerable glacis on the northern slopes of the ranges, they would be extremely liable to pressures, political or military, from Russia in the north which they would find it hard to learn about in time, let alone counter. Ardagh, therefore, advocated a boundary alignment which took in the crest of the Kunlun range and enclosed within British territory the upper reaches of the Yarkard river and its tributaries and the Karakash river. In Ardagh's view full use should be made of the northern territorial claims of the Mir of Hunza and the Maharaja of Kashmir.

Lord Elgin's Government, in 1897, refused to accept Sir John Ardagh's conclusions, and, as we have seen, proposed the moderate or watershed boundary.[19] Lord

[19] Elgin to Hamilton, no. 170 of 23 Dec. 1897, in FO/17/1356.

Curzon's Government, which followed Lord Elgin's in the beginning of 1899, had different ideas. This change was mainly the result of a Russian move, the establishment of a small military outpost in the Taghdumbash Pamir by a party of the Russian Consular escort at Kashgar, which was accompanied by Russian pressure on the Chinese authorities to curtail the rights of the Mir of Hunza here and in Raskam. In the last region the Chinese had just begun to drive out the Mir's Kanjut subjects and replace them by Chinese colonists. Perhaps Lord Elgin would have overlooked all this; but not Lord Curzon, who had very definite ideas about the correct British policy in the face of Russian advance. Here was a matter of prestige. Curzon felt that the Hunza claims must be supported. As he noted to Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, in May 1899:

> I do not propose that we should back up the Hunza people, because the lands to which they are laying claim have anything to do with our frontier—as a matter of fact they lie outside it; but because they are lands to which Hunza has a *bona fide* claim. . . . If we do not stand by the Hunza men in a case when right is so obviously on their side, we shall give the impression that Russia has only to threaten in order to carry the day, and shall forfeit much of the respect upon which on the confines of Empire power so largely depends.[20]

Curzon, in fact, rejected the Macartney–MacDonald boundary in favour of the Ardagh boundary, which was in turn a strategic adaptation of the Johnson boundary of 1865. The Ardagh boundary from 1899 became accepted British doctrine. The Russians retained their post at Tashkurgan in the Taghdumbash Pamir—it remained there until after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Chinese continued to argue about the Mir of Hunza's

[20] Curzon–Hamilton Correspondence in the I.O. Library, Eur. MS D/510/1, Curzon to Hamilton, 10 May 1899.

grazing rights in Sarikol (Taghdumbash Pamir) and his rights of settlement in Raskam. In these circumstances no attempt was made to secure a Chinese definition of the northern Kashmir boundary along the lines of the 1899 Note. The British, in fact, were now waiting for Russia to move. Curzon was convinced that Kashgaria would become Russian one of these days. The Viceroys who followed him, Lords Minto and Hardinge, shared this view. In 1912 it looked as if Russia's moment had come.

Anglo-Russian negotiations

The Chinese Revolution which broke out in late 1911 seemed, by the middle of 1912, to be threatening to bring about the complete collapse of Chinese power in Central Asia. Outer Mongolia declared its independence. The Chinese, as will be seen, were driven out of Lhasa and central Tibet. In Sinkiang the attacks on Russian-protected persons by members of Chinese secret societies, and the presence in the main cities of battalions of mutinous Chinese soldiery, gave Russia the excuse to increase her Consular escorts, it was then reported, to well over 1,000 Cossacks. Even George Macartney, no alarmist, was convinced that all this was the prelude to Russian annexation. In these circumstances the securing of the Ardagh boundary became a matter of some importance to the British. On 12 September 1912 Lord Hardinge dispatched to Lord Crewe, the Secretary of State for India, the following telegram, which sums up the situation well enough:

> Although Russian occupation of New Dominion and Kashgar may be inevitable, and although there may be no specific military danger in this, there are serious political disadvantages which must not be overlooked or under-estimated. Such occupation would bring Russia within 150 miles of Srinagar and 300 miles of Simla, and in spite of difficulties of intervening country the propinquity would inevitably introduce new and undesirable political conditions. Further, our trade on this side, though small, is increasing with improvements in trade route. With Russian occupation that trade would be stifled, while re-opening by Russians of old Khotan trade route into Tibet will decrease our Tibetan trade. Again, China claims suzerainty over Hunza Nagar. In Chinese hands this is harmless, but transferred to Russia, it will prove embarrassing. For these reasons, we deprecate any diplomatic action calculated to facilitate Russian occupation.
>
> If, however, it is forced on us, first essential is to demand as a preliminary to negotiations, recognition of a boundary line which will place Taghdumbash, Raskam, Shahidula and Aksai Chin outside Russian and within our territory. A line similar to that proposed by Sir John Ardagh in 1897 . . . will attain this object. . . . A good line would be one commencing from Baiyik Peak running eastwards to Chang Pass, leaving Taghdumbash and Dehda on British side, thence along crest of range through Sargon Pass and crossing Yarkand River to crest of Kuen Lun Range, north of Raskam, and along crest of that range through . . . Kukahang and Dozakh and Yargi and Kilik Passes, to Sanju or Grim Pass, thence crossing Karakash River along Kuen Lun watershed to Tibetan frontier, including Aksai Chin plain in our territory.[21]

At the moment when this interesting telegram was drafted, British relations with Russia in Central Asia were dominated by the provisions of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 on Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. By 1912, however, both Russia and Britain had come to realize that this instrument was no longer satisfactory. Russia wanted more in Persia. She also felt that she needed some measure of local contact, denied to her by the Convention, with the authorities in north-western Afghanistan over issues such as locust control, plague prevention, and water conservation. Britain, as will shortly be seen, found that limitations on her relations with Tibet, acceptable

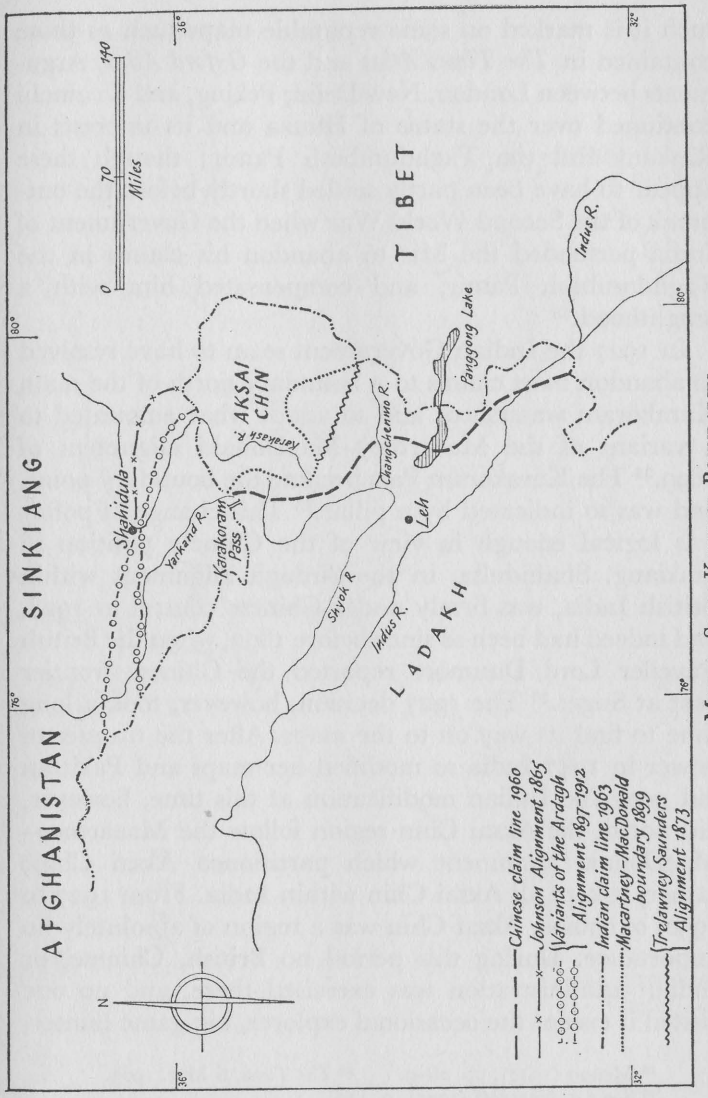
[21] *F.O. Confidential Print*, 'Affairs of Tibet and Mongolia, 1912'.

in 1907, were now severely hindering her response to the situation created by the collapse of Chinese power at Lhasa. The British also felt that the great increase in Russian influence in Mongolia, a region which in 1907 Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British negotiator of the Anglo-Russian Convention, had refused to discuss, should be accompanied by compensations to the British elsewhere. Finally, the 1907 Convention had said nothing about Sinkiang. If Russia were indeed to annex Sinkiang, then some Anglo-Russian agreement on the resultant problems was clearly essential. All these factors made it evident that the 1907 Convention needed most urgently to be revised. In September 1912, at the moment of the dispatch of this telegram, Sazanov, the Russian Foreign Minister, was actually in England to discuss some aspects of such a revision.

The situation on the Sinkiang–Kashmir border, therefore, as also the situation on the Indo-Tibetan border at this time, depended for anything like a satisfactory final solution upon Anglo-Russian negotiations. Following the Sazanov visit negotiations along these lines continued in a desultory manner between London and St Petersburg. They nearly produced results in 1915 when, in return for the cession to Russia of Constantinople and the Dardanelles, areas which the British then hoped they were in the process of conquering from the Turks, the Russians seemed willing to make real concessions in Tibet and Chinese Turkestan. However, no doubt in part because of the failure of the Dardanelles campaign, these negotiations came to nothing. They received their final death blow with the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.[22]

At the end of the First World War British India emerged with the Ardagh boundary, as defined in the 1912 telegram quoted above, as more or less its official border. As

[22] See e.g. Taylor (1954), p. 541.

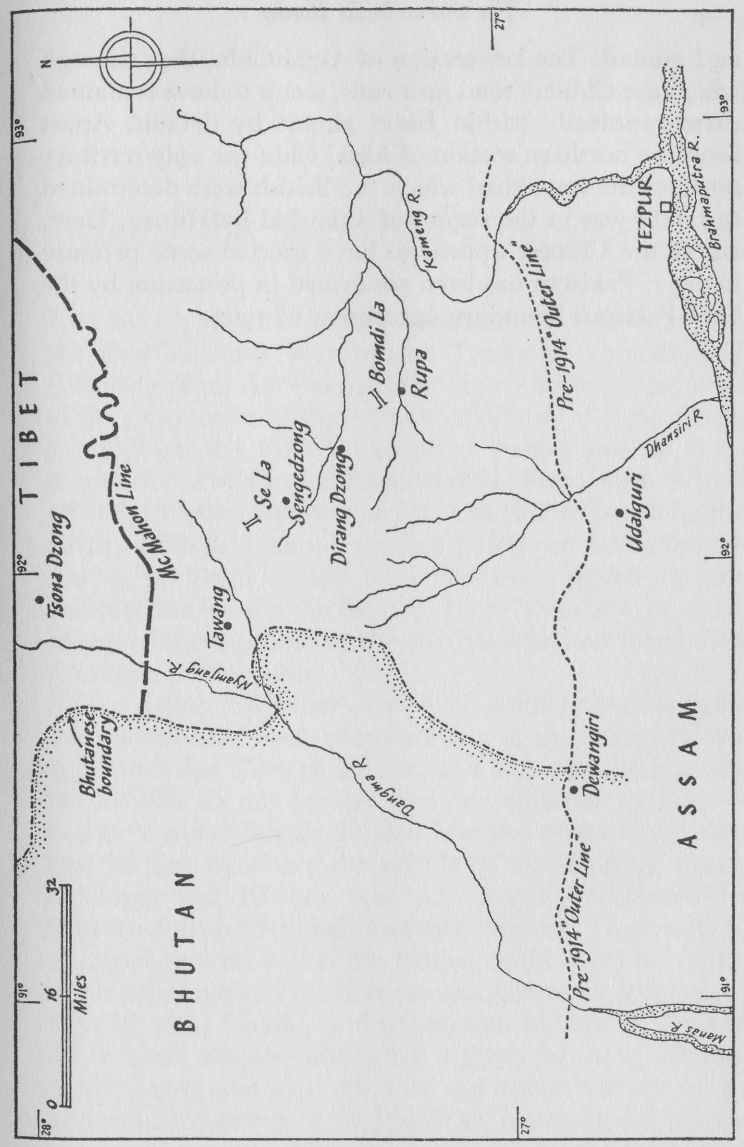


MAP 9. SOME KASHMIR BOUNDARIES

such it is marked on some reputable maps such as those contained in *The Times Atlas* and the *Oxford Atlas*. Arguments between London, New Delhi, Peking, and Urumchi continued over the status of Hunza and its interests in Raskam and the Taghdumbash Pamir; though these appear to have been partly settled shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War when the Government of India persuaded the Mir to abandon his claims in the Taghdumbash Pamir, and compensated him with a knighthood.[23]

In 1927 the Indian Government seem to have resolved to abandon most claims to a boundary north of the main Karakoram watershed, and to adopt what amounted to a variant of the Macartney–MacDonald alignment of 1899.[24] The Karakoram Pass became the boundary point, and was so indicated by a pillar.[25] This change of policy was logical enough in view of the Chinese position in Sinkiang. Shahidulla, in the Ardagh alignment within British India, was firmly under Chinese control in 1928, and indeed had been so since before 1892, when the British traveller Lord Dunmore reported the Chinese frontier post at Suget.[26] The 1927 decision, however, took a long time to find its way on to the maps. After the transfer of power in 1947 India so modified her maps and Pakistan did not. The Indian modification at this time, however, did not in the Aksai Chin region follow the Macartney–MacDonald alignment which partitioned Aksai Chin; rather, it kept all Aksai Chin within India. From 1927 to 1950, of course, Aksai Chin was a region of absolutely no importance. During this period no British, Chinese, or Indian administration was exercised there, and no one visited it except the occasional explorer, big-game hunter,

[23] Menon (1947), pp. 28–9. [24] *The Times*, 6 Mar. 1963.
[25] See e.g. Nazaroff (1935), p. 199.
[26] Dunmore (1894), i. 224.



MAP 10. THE TAWANG TRACT

and nomad. The key section of Aksai Chin, that through which the Chinese road now runs, seems to have remained cartographically within India almost by default. Apart from the northern section of Aksai Chin the only territory north of the watershed which the British were determined to retain was in the region of Shimshal by Hunza. Here, where the Chinese appear to have exerted some pressure in 1937, Pakistan has been confirmed in possession by the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement of 1963.

8

Making the McMahon Line, 1826–1914

THE British acquired Assam as a result of their victory in the First Burmese War by the Treaty of Yandaboo in February 1826. After experimenting with the government of the new territory through the medium of local rulers, in 1838–42 the British converted Assam into a Non-Regulation Province of British India. From 1826 British officials in Assam appreciated that the hill tribes along the north of the Brahmaputra valley posed peculiar administrative problems which were far from solved by the delimitation of the McMahon Line boundary in 1914. Many of these problems the British inherited from their Assamese predecessors.

The Assam hill tribes—by which term I mean it to be understood here those peoples living in the Assam Himalaya along the Tibetan border, and not tribes such as the Nagas who do not occupy territory adjacent to Tibet—can for convenience be divided into two major categories. On the one hand are the people of the Tawang Tract, adjoining east Bhutan, who are heavily influenced by Tibetan culture, religion, and government. These belong to a society with which the British could carry on diplomatic relations in a manner comparable to their relations with Bhutan, Sikkim, and other such hill states. On the other hand are the aboriginal tribes, the Akas, Daflas, Miris, Abors, and Mishmis, who did not possess any of the apparatus of government which an international lawyer would accept as forming the basis of a state. These tribal

groups, so one commentator has recently remarked, can be regarded so far as their own independence stands in international law, as *res nullius*.[1] Unlike so many writers, including the authority to whom reference has just been made, the British did not in the period 1826–1914 confuse these two categories. They treated the Tawang Tract in a way which was fundamentally different from their policy towards the 'aboriginal tribes'. I will endeavour to maintain this distinction here, and will therefore discuss the Tawang Tract before dealing with the tribes farther to the east (Map 10).

The Tawang Tract

Through the Tawang Tract, which extended from the Tibetan plateau right down to the Assam plains just north of Udalguri, ran an important trade route between India and Tibet. Merchants from the north came down it in search of rice and bringing silver, gold dust, wool, salt, musk, Chinese silk, and yak-tails (valued as fly whisks). In 1809 it was estimated that the Assam–Tibet trade by way of Tawang was worth a total of Rs 200,000.[2] The British early in their occupation of Assam made efforts to develop this trade, which had declined in the years of trouble prior to 1826. In 1833 one Lt Rutherford established an annual fair at Udalguri which soon grew into a flourishing meeting place for Tibetan and Indian traders. Mackenzie, the leading British authority on hill-tribe policy in the nineteenth century, writing in 1884, described this fair thus:

> A very interesting spectacle may be seen there annually. Traders from all parts of Thibet, from Lassa and places east, west and even north of it are present in crowds, some of them clad in Chinese dresses, using Chinese implements, and looking to all intents Chinese. Many have their families with them, and carry their goods on sturdy ponies, of which some hundreds are brought down to the fair yearly.[3]

It was the trade route through Tawang that first attracted British attention to this district and resulted in the discovery that Tawang was part of Tibet. As Major Jenkins, Agent to the Governor-General for the North East Frontier, noted on 19 August 1847,' the Tawang Raja is not under the Government of Bootan, but is a feudatory of the Raja or Governor of Lassa'. This fact, Jenkins thought, made Tawang particularly attractive as a line of communication between British India and Tibet, because

> there are by this route no intermediate independent authorities, the territories of the two great Government of Britain and China are here coterminous, and this is the nearest route by which the produce of the North Western Provinces of China, and of the Eastern Provinces of Tartary could be brought into the British dominions.[4]

Mackenzie, whose description of the Udalguri fair has just been quoted, wrote to the Indian Government in 1873 (he was then Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal) that 'the Towang country is held by Bhuteas who are entirely independent of Bhutan proper, and directly under Thibet. On all occasions Thibetan officials take part in whatever is done there. . . . Here then . . . we are in actual contact with Thibet'[5].

[1] Hudson (1962), pp. 203–6. Some of the accounts of the hill tribes suggest an almost Rousseauesque state of nature. For example, 'there is absolutely no settled Government among the Mishmis—each village, and even each house being quite independent, managing its own affairs. Every man is his own master' (G. L. S. Ward (1901).

[2] Mackenzie (1884), p. 15.

[3] Ibid. p. 16. A recent writer has tried to deny that Tibetans in fact did visit this fair, but the weight of evidence seems against him. See Elwin (1959), p. 353 n.

[4] I.O., *Encl. to Secret Letters from India*, vol. 114, no. 36.

[5] Mackenzie to India, 23 June 1873. This document is included in a collection of papers presented to Parliament in 1874 under the title *Report on Trade Routes and Fairs on the Northern Frontiers of India*, bound in *Accounts & Papers 1874*, xlix, f. 567.

Tawang, which the British in the nineteenth century considered to extend to just north of Udalguri, seems to have at some past period acquired influence and rights in the territory farther south towards the north bank of the Brahmaputra. In a work published in 1841 the Kariapara Duar area of Assam was described as being 'held by the Towung Raja, a chieftain immediately dependent upon Lassa';[6] and in 1844 a group of six chiefs from the Tawang Tract accepted British control of Kuriapara in return for an annual payment of Rs 5,000. In the third article of this document, to which reference has been made on p. 53 above, the Chiefs agreed that 'we have relinquished all powers in the [Kuriapara] Dwar, and can no longer levy any rent from the ryots [peasants]'.[7] Thus this treaty, whatever might have been the status of the chiefs who signed it, was clearly a contract in which they relinquished territorial rights in exchange for the payment of compensation. In Assamese terminology, which the British borrowed, this type of payment was called *posa*.

As far as the British Government could then ascertain, Tawang was ruled by a number of local chieftains, the Seven Rajas (though there were rarely seven assembled at any one time) under the sovereignty of the Tibetan authorities at Lhasa. In 1852 British relations with these chiefs became critical. The leader of the Seven Rajas, referred to as the Gelong (or Gelling) Raja, was in the habit of collecting the annual payment of the Rs 5,000 from the British and handing it on to his masters farther north.[8] In 1852 he seems to have attempted to hold on to the money, with the result that he found himself obliged to flee to Darranga in British territory. A Tibetan

[6] Robinson (1841), p. 294.

[7] Aitchison (1909 ed.), ii. 297.

[8] Tawang monastery kept Rs 500 of this, and sent the rest on to Drebung monastery at Lhasa.

force (at least, it is described as Tibetan in British documents) then assembled on the British frontier to lend weight to the demand for the Gelong's return with the money. The British refused, and sent a force of their own, 400 infantry and two 6-pounder guns, up to the border. The Tibetans were duly impressed, and, in an attempt to save face, agreed to withdraw if the British would give them a paper declaring that the Gelong was dead. The British again refused. After much talk terms were finally arrived at in 1853, by which the British agreed to continue paying the Rs 5,000, and the Tibetans agreed to pardon the Gelong who would continue to live in British territory. In 1861 the Gelong made peace with his masters and returned to Tawang; but soon he was once more forced to take refuge south of the border. In 1864 a party of hillmen, apparently under orders from the Tawang authorities, crossed the British border and murdered the Gelong.[9]

In the crisis of 1852–3 there can be no doubt that the British treated the Tawang Tract as part of the territory of their Tibetan neighbour, though their knowledge of the precise mechanism of the exercise of Tibetan influence in Tawang was slight. In 1875 they began to obtain more accurate details on this point, and by 1913, when F. M. Bailey returned from his adventurous journey along the Tsangpo to the north of the Assam Himalaya, their information was more complete.[10] The Tawang Tract, it transpired, could be divided into two distinct regions. First, nearest to Tibet, was the neighbourhood of the great monastery of Tawang, a daughter house of Drebung monastery at Lhasa. Here in the winter months resided the two Dzongpön (or District Officers) of the Tibetan

[9] Mackenzie, pp. 16–17; see also Allen (1905), pp. 54–5.

[10] Trotter, in *JRGS* (1877), p. 119; Bailey (1914), pp. 13–14 and Bailey (1957), p. 239.

administrative centre of Tsöna, and Tawang proper came under their direct jurisdiction. In Tawang they, or their representatives, were *ex officio* members of a local council, the Trukdri, which conducted the day-to-day government. On the Trukdri the Tawang monastery, which had between 500 and 700 monks, was of course strongly represented; but the Dzongpöns, as the representatives of Lhasa, were undoubtedly the titular chief authority.[11]

Tawang proper extended from what is now the McMahon Line boundary south to the Se La, the scene of the recent Chinese victory. South of the Se La, right down to the edge of the plains, were Dzongpöns appointed by the Tawang monastery; and here, with the exception of the single village of Sengedzong at the foot of the Se La, the Tsöna Dzongpöns had no direct influence. As a simplification, it could be said that to the north of the Se La lay the Tsöna district in which was included Tawang, while south of the Se La, with the exception of Sengedzong, lay the monastic estates of Tawang monastery. Sengedzong seems to have been a private estate of the Tsöna Dzongpöns. South of the Bomdi La, in the region of the villages of Rupa and Shergaon, lived the Sherdukpen, a Mönpa tribe with a great measure of autonomy under the rule of a council of headmen to which the Assamese referred as the Sat (or seven) Rajas. The Sherdukpen were under the suzerainty of Tawang monastery, though the monks exercised here a loose rein. Elsewhere south of the Se La, except in Sengedzong, the Tawang monks governed through four Dzongpöns (District Officers), two at Dirangdzong and two at Taklungdzong.[12]

[11] For some photographs of Tawang, see Elwin, in *Geog. Mag.*, Aug. 1959. The Dalai Lama passed through Tawang in April 1959 during his flight from Lhasa to India. Elwin notes that the sixth Dalai Lama was born near Tawang in the late seventeenth century.

[12] India, General Staff, *Military Report, 1920* (1921), p. 29. I must thank Capt. G. A. Nevill for giving me a copy of this useful document.

The inhabitants of the Tawang Tract are usually called the Mönpas, though there are several subdivisions within this category; and the Tibetans call the whole Tawang region Mönyul. The Mönpas were heavily taxed by the Tawang monks, and in theory they received in return protection against raids by the aboriginal tribes, the *Lobas*, to their east. By 1913, however, that protection was no longer very effective. There is evidence that before 1914 the Mönpas and the very similar peoples of east Bhutan had been slowly expanding eastwards at the expense of the tribes. Bailey, for example, found in the Tibetan border area of Pemako, where the Tsangpo cuts south, Mönpa settlers from east Bhutan who still considered themselves to be subjects of the Bhutanese state even though separated from their homeland by tracts of Tibetan and tribal territory.[13]

The whole of the Tawang Tract, Mönyul, was included within India by the McMahon boundary of 1914, a line which it has recently been claimed embodies ancient tradition. In fact, before 1914 the boundary between British Assam and the Tawang Tract was well known. It was—and this may cause some surprise—the only section of the boundary between British India and Tibet which, in the nineteenth century, had been jointly demarcated by British and Tibetan officials. This startling event, long forgotten, took place in 1872 when four monastic officials from Tibet came down to supervise a boundary settlement which Major Graham was making as a consequence of the 1853 agreement.[14] As the British General Staff in India noted on 1 June 1912, 'the present boundary (demarcated) is south of Tawang, running westwards along the foothills from near Ugalguri to the southern Bhutanese border'.[15]

[13] Bailey (1914), pp. 2–3; Bailey (1957), pp. 74–5.

[14] See Mackenzie to India, 23 June 1873 (Mackenzie (1884), p. 18).

[15] I.O., *Pol. External Files 1910*, vol. 14, no. 3057.

Ugalguri, indeed, was only eleven miles south of this boundary.

The tribes of east Assam

To the east of the Tawang Tract lies the country of the aboriginal hill tribes, the Akas, Daflas, Apa Tanis, Miris, Abors, and Mishmis. It would require a whole book to give anything like an adequate discussion of the complex history of British relations with these diverse tribal groups. For a description of these peoples, accompanied by the most impressive illustrations, I would refer the interested reader to E. T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*.[16] Of these tribes Sir Robert Reid, who was Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942, has written: 'they are not Indian in any sense of the word, neither in origin, nor in language, nor in appearance, nor in habits, nor in outlook; and it is only a historical accident that they have been tacked on to an Indian Province.'[17] The British, in the nineteenth century, had no wish whatsoever to bring these people within the embrace of the Indian Empire. All they wanted was to preserve the tranquillity of the Assam border with the minimum of expenditure. The British policy was that of non-interference. As late as 1908, when it was already becoming clear to some observers that this policy could not be continued much longer, Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India, wrote that 'the policy of non-interference is, in my opinion, essentially sound'.[18]

From 1826 it had been clear that the tribes were a problem. They lived in extremely difficult territory. They had long been accustomed to raid into the Assam plains, and as a result the old Assamese rulers had evolved a

[16] See also Dunbar (1938).

[17] Sir R. Reid, in *JRCAS* (1944), p. 174.

[18] I.O., *Pol. External Files 1910*, vol. 13, no. 1261, Morley to Minto, 4 Sept. 1908.

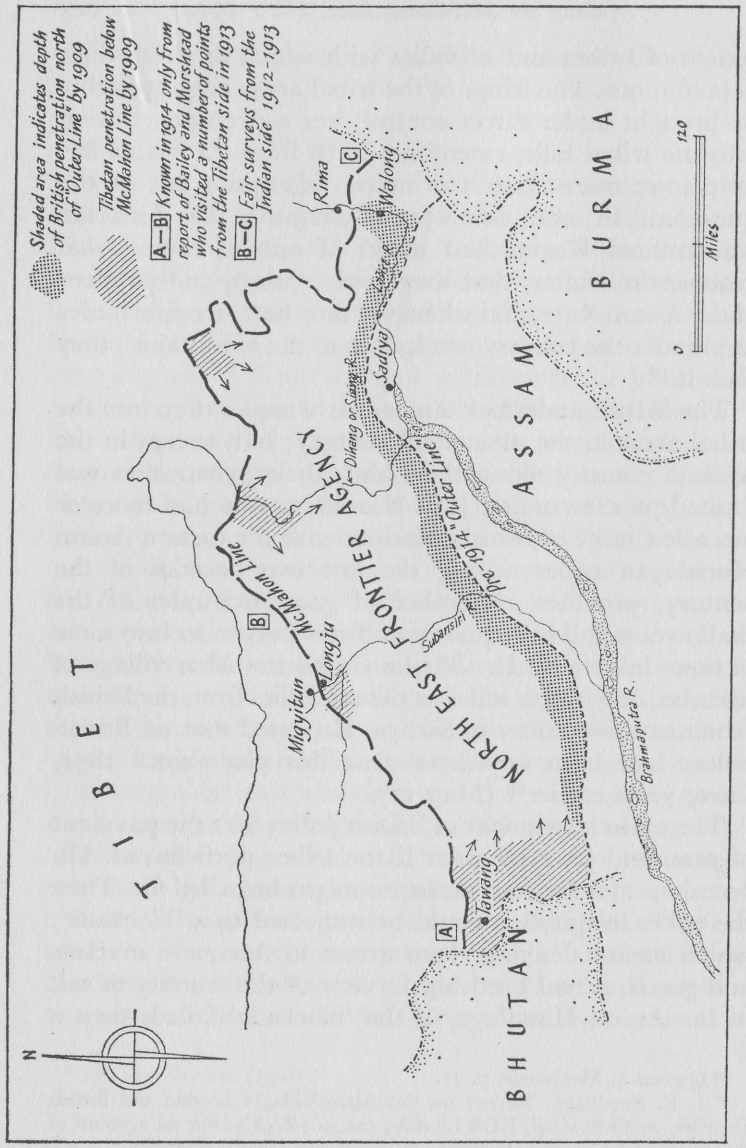
system of bribes and subsidies with which to check their depredations. The fringe of the tribal areas might possibly be brought under direct control, but a deep penetration into the tribal hills, extending north from the plains for, in places, more than 100 miles, was quite out of the question. In the seventeenth century the historian Muhammed Kazim had noted of one of these tribal groups, the Daflas, that they were 'entirely independent of the Assam Raja, and whenever they find an opportunity to plunder the country contiguous to the mountains', they took it.[19]

The British undertook a measure of exploration into the tribal areas in the nineteenth century; but, except in the Mishmi country along the Lohit, their penetration was limited to a few miles. J. F. Needham, who had more or less sole charge of British relations with the eastern Assam Himalayan tribes during the last two decades of the century, provides a number of good examples of the shallowness and infrequency of British advances into some of these hill tracts. In 1884 he visited the Abor village of Membo, only thirty miles as the crow flies from the British administrative centre of Sadiya. He noted that no British officer had been anywhere near this place since 1854, thirty years earlier[20] (Map 11).

The main instrument of British policy was the payment of *posa*, and its suspension if the tribes misbehaved. On occasions more serious measures might be called for. Then the tribes in question could be subjected to a 'blockade', which meant denying them access to Assamese markets and goods, a real hardship in view of the scarcity of salt in the Assam Himalaya. If the 'blockade' failed, then a

[19] Quoted in Mackenzie, p. 27.

[20] J. F. Needham, 'Report on the Abor Villages beyond the British Frontier, 27 Oct. 1884', RGS Library, cat. no. Z/48/3. For an account of Needham and his work see Prince H. d'Orleans (1898), p. 351.



MAP. 11. EXTENT OF BRITISH AND TIBETAN PENETRATION INTO THE TRIBAL AREAS OF THE ASSAM HIMALAYA BY 1909

military force could be sent into the hills to show the flag, burn down a few huts, and generally teach the tribes a lesson. The tribes, however, did not seem to have particularly long memories, and the loss of a few huts and the killing of a few tribesmen every thirty years or so no more deterred them from folly than has the outbreak of world wars at similar intervals seemed to have made European foreign policy more sensible. Moreover, punitive expeditions were not only expensive, but also there were politicians in India and in England who found them objectionable on moral grounds.

The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, which created the so-called 'Inner Line', was a device designed to reduce the likelihood of situations arising in which a punitive expedition would become necessary. This was a purely administrative measure, the definition of a line across which certain classes of persons could not pass without special permits. Its intention in the Assam tribal areas was to prevent friction between the tribes and people such as tappers of wild rubber and catchers of wild elephants who might wander into dangerous territory. Moreover, the spread of tea plantations into the foothills of the Assam Himalaya also promised tribal trouble; and Government felt it to be as well to have some means of controlling economic development in this direction. The 'Inner Line', where it existed, served as an administrative boundary. Taxes were not collected beyond it. It was not, however, the international boundary of British India. This was the 'Outer Line'.

In 1875–6 the 'Inner Line' was defined and published for the Darrang and Lakhimpur Districts of Assam, running along the foothills from the Bhutanese border to Nizamghat on the lower reaches of the Dibang tributary of the Brahmaputra. At the same time part of the 'Outer Line' was demarcated, though no publicity was given to

this fact. It ran from the Bhutanese border to the Baroi river at lat. 27°, long. 93° 20′; east of the Baroi there was no demarcated 'Outer Line', though the course of such a line was defined verbally by the Indian Government, as following 'a readily recognizable line along the foot of the hills as far as Nizamghat' where it joined the 'Inner Line'. Beyond Nizamghat there was no 'Outer Line' at all and the only boundary was the purely jurisdictional one prescribed by the Regulation of 1873. Between the Bhutanese border and Nizamghat the two lines, 'Inner' and 'Outer', ran very close to each other, perhaps less than ten miles apart. The line of the foothills, which the 'Outer Line' followed, is apparently a most distinct geographical feature. Some observers have described the Assam Himalaya as rising 'like a wall from the valley'.[21]

In recent years attempts have been made to deny that the British international border ever followed the foothill alignment, and that the McMahon boundary, following the main Himalayan watershed, has always been the accepted line. Unfortunately, even the most casual research shows that this contention is quite without foundation. The true situation as of 1908 is shown with great precision in the map *The Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam*, 32 miles to the inch, specially prepared for the Foreign Department of the Government of India and appended to volume II of the 1909 edition of Aitchison's *Collection of Treaties*. Here alternating dots and dashes mark the international boundary between Bhutan and Assam, and they continue to the Baroi river where they are replaced by a line of alternating dashes and crosses. At Nizamghat dashes and crosses give way to dots alone.

While the map just referred to locates, correctly, the international boundary of pre-McMahon days as following

[21] Mackenzie, pp. 55–6: I.O. Memo. B.180, 'North-Eastern Frontier of India; tribal territory north of Assam', 3 Dec. 1910.

the foothills, it also makes clear that the tribal areas were not considered by the British as being of the same status in international law as, for example, was Sinkiang. The tribal areas, including much of the Tawang Tract south of the Se La (but not Tawang itself) are coloured with a light yellow wash. What is meant here, really, is that the British regarded the tribal areas of the Assam Himalaya, while not under British administration in any sense of the word, as yet falling within the British sphere of influence. There was no need to define the question further, it was felt, because there was no other sphere of influence in the immediate neighbourhood into which they could fall. Was this true?

Relations with Tibet

It has already been observed (p. 26) that some of the aboriginal tribes in the Assam Himalaya had entered into relationships with the Tibetans for the same reasons as they had with the British. The tribes along the southern Tibetan border, and the eastern border of the Tawang Tract, raided Tibetan subjects and traded at Tibetan markets. The Tibetans, on the whole, tried as did the British to have as little to do with the *Lobas* as possible; but propinquity led to relationships. Subsidies and bribes were paid to the *Lobas* as, for example, on the upper reaches of the Subansiri where, once every twelve years, Tibetans were accustomed to make the *Ringkor* or 'Great Pilgrimage' deep into tribal territory. On these occasions substantial presents of salt and cloth had to be made to the *Lobas* to keep them from massacring the pilgrims. Where the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra cuts through the main range Abor tribesmen and Tibetans inevitably came into contact; and in this region the Tibetans by the end of the nineteenth century appear to have established some measure of political control over the nearest tribal villages.

This was a particularly complicated region politically, because it touched on Pome (or Poyul) which was a Tibetan district claiming independence from Lhasa, and because it was here, in what is known as Pemako, that immigrants from east Bhutan had been making their way during the nineteenth century. Here there can be no doubt that Abor tribesmen were being slowly pushed south by Tibetans and Bhutanese. Farther east again, on the Lohit, the Tibetans had a long history of contact with the Mishmi tribesmen. There are early nineteenth-century references to Tibetans intervening in tribal wars, presumably from most understandable motives of attempting to secure peace on the border.[22]

At the two extremities of the Assam Himalaya, in the Tawang Tract and along the Lohit, there is evidence in pre-McMahon days of a great deal of movement up and down between the plains and the Tibetan plateau (in the case of Tawang) or the limits of direct Tibetan administration (in the case of the Lohit). Through Tawang ran a major trade route, and here we have seen that Tibetan administration came down to within a few miles of Udalguri. Up and down the Lohit also a certain amount of trade took place, and Mishmis from the Tibetan side turned up from time to time at the markets of Assam. Tawang was, in the nineteenth century, as closed to European travel as the rest of Tibet; hence the Lohit route seemed attractive to 'pioneers of commerce' such as T. T. Cooper who were seeking an overland link between British India and the markets of west China. Captains Bedford and Wilcox made separate journeys up the lower Lohit in 1826, Lt Rowlatt in 1844–5, T. T. Cooper in 1869–70. A French missionary, Father Krick, reached Tibetan territory by this route in 1851 and again in 1854, on the latter occasion accompanied by Father Boury and

[22] G. L. S. Ward (1901).

meeting his death at Mishmi hands.[23] In 1885–6 J. F. Needham and Captain Molesworth also reached Tibet this way, stopping a mile or so south of the Tibetan administrative post of Rima.[24] As a result of all this exploring the British obtained, for the Lohit region, a fairly good idea of where the Tibetan boundary actually was. Krick and Needham both established this point as being in the neighbourhood of Walong. Here, where lived a single Tibetan family, Mishmi country gave way to Tibet. More will be heard of Walong later.

Between Walong and Udalguri, the two fixed points on the Tibetan border on the through routes, the British before 1911 had nothing in the way of precise information as to the southern limits of Tibetan jurisdiction. In this long stretch of hill country the tribes did not seem to possess any north–south mobility. Evidence of indirect contact with Tibet could be found amongst the southern tribes in the shape of Tibetan swords and Tibetan and Chinese beads and other ornaments. Observers such as Dalton, however, who were interested in such relationships, could not find a single tribesman among the Abors or Miris or Daflas who would say that he had actually been up to the high snowy ranges and seen the country beyond. It seemed, and this conclusion was later to be confirmed, that here was a kind of horizontal stratification of tribes. For this phenomenon there was in most cases an economic origin, in that the tribes nearest Assam or Tibet tended to impose a blockade on the movement of interior tribes so as to give themselves a monopoly in the trade

[23] For a conspectus of exploration up the Lohit see the map appended to Hamilton (1912).

[24] Needham (1889); see also his 'Visit to Zayul Valley in Eastern Tibet', RGS Library, cat. no. Z/47/11. A British visitor to Rima in 1933 gave this description: 'about twelve houses, with the usual pigs and hens scampering around' (see Kaulback (1936), p. 69; also his 'Zayul and the Eastern Tibet Border Country', *JRCAS*, 1934.

between those tribes and the outside world. It is this horizontal layering of the tribes that makes nonsense of both Indian and Chinese claims to have exercised traditional control over the entire tribal area. The Tibetans (from whom China derives her claim) had contact with the northern layer, and British India, following the Assamese dynasties, had contact with the southern layer. In between lay a real no-man's land, a region where no Indian or British official and no Tibetan tax gatherer had ever penetrated. In most areas, both on the north and on the south, the depth of penetration was very slight indeed. When the British, in 1911, started to probe deep into the tribal hills, they were in most places certainly the first *officials*, as this term is understood, ever to come in contact with the tribesmen. British India could indeed in much of the tribal area claim sovereignty by virtue of the international lawyer's version of the old rule of 'finding's keeper'. This is true of *most* areas, but not of *all* areas, a point which will be raised again.

The death of Williamson

By the beginning of the twentieth century the old policy of non-interference beyond the foothills except in case of a major outrage on the part of the tribesmen was becoming outmoded. The developing economy of Assam began to find an obstacle in the 'Inner Line' restrictions. Timber companies looked enviously at the untouched forests beyond. Tea planters saw great profit in the foothills. The Indian Government began to face requests by important interests that the 'Inner Line' be advanced northwards. At the same time, it became clear to those who had any understanding of the tribal problem that it was foolish to leave the hill peoples alone to the extent that British policy then dictated. A champion of a new tribal approach emerged in Noel Williamson who, in 1905, took over the

post of Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, from J. F. Needham, thus ending Needham's twenty-three year reign as uncrowned king of tribal affairs.

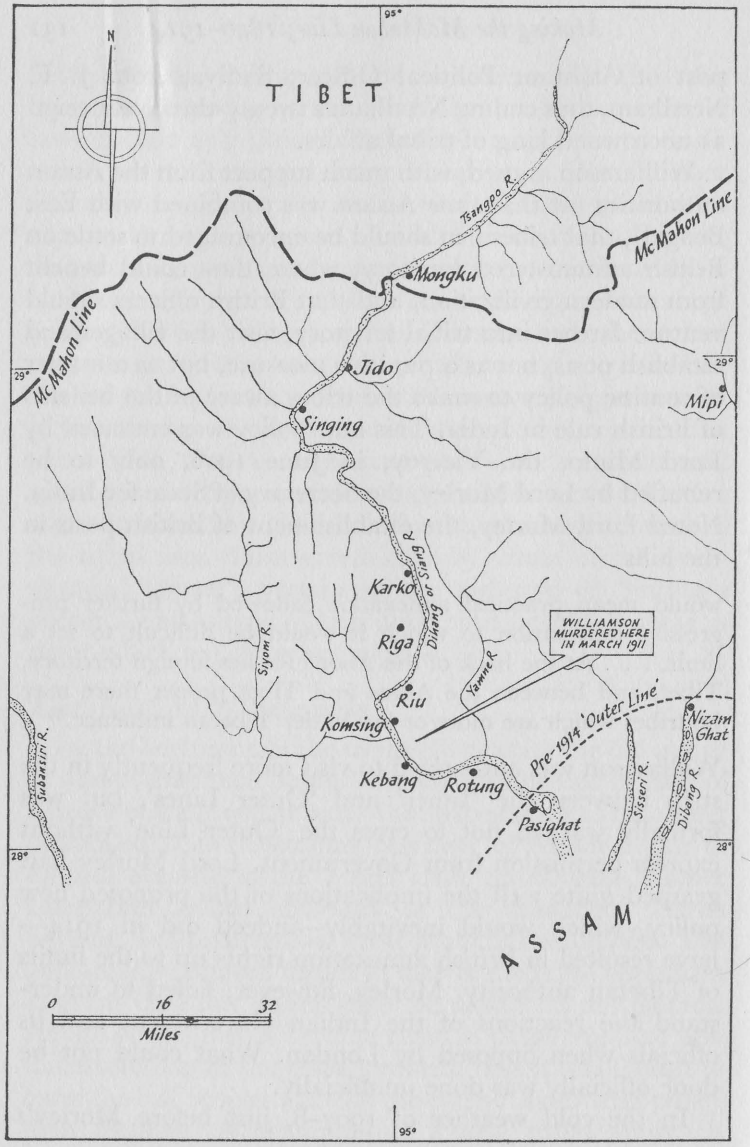
Williamson argued, with much support from the Assam authorities (at that time Assam was combined with East Bengal), that tribesmen should be encouraged to settle on British administered territory, where they could benefit from modern civilization, and that British officers should venture farther into tribal territory, visit the villages and establish posts, not as a punitive measure, but as a matter of routine policy to make the tribes aware of the benefits of British rule in India. This new policy was endorsed by Lord Minto, the Viceroy, in June 1908, only to be rebuffed by Lord Morley, the Secretary of State for India. Noted Lord Morley, the establishment of British posts in the hills

> would mean practical annexation followed by further progressive annexation to which it would be difficult to set a limit. . . . At the back of the Abor hills lies foreign territory, Tibet, and between the Abors and Tibet proper there may be tribes which are more or less under Tibetan influence.[25]

Williamson was authorized to visit more frequently in the strip between the 'Inner' and 'Outer Lines', but was formally warned not to cross the 'Outer Line' without express permission from Government. Lord Morley had grasped quite well the implications of the proposed new policy, which would inevitably—indeed did in 1914—have resulted in British annexation rights up to the limits of Tibetan authority. Morley, however, failed to understand the reactions of the Indian Government and its officials when opposed by London. What could not be done officially was done unofficially.

In the cold weather of 1907–8, just before Morley's

[25] I.O., *Pol. External Files 1910*, vol. 13. Morley to Minto, 4 Sept. 1908.



MAP 12. THE DIHANG OR SIANG VALLEY

ruling, Williamson went up the Lohit almost to Walong, which point he regarded as the Tibetan border (Map 13). This venture of some ninety miles beyond the administrative border was clearly a violation of the spirit of the non-interference policy, though not of the letter since there was no 'Outer Line' at all across the Lohit. In the cold weather of 1908–9, after Morley had laid down the law, Williamson crossed the 'Outer Line' on the basis of a rather nebulous authority given several years earlier, and visited the Abor village of Kebang, making the farthest British penetration to date up the Dihang river valley. When this act was queried by London, Williamson, supported by his local Government, described this visit as purely private and at the invitation of the headman of Kebang. In the cold weather of 1909–10 Williamson made another trip up the Lohit, during which he met and talked with the chief Tibetan officials of Rima. In early 1911 he again went up the Lohit, all the way to the border at Walong. Then, in March 1911, he travelled up the Dihang (Brahmaputra) well north of the 'Outer Line', in the company of the tea estate doctor, Gregorson (Map 12). On 30 March 1911 Gregorson and Williamson were attacked and killed by Abor tribesmen.[26] The death of these two men provided the immediate occasion for that revision of tribal policy for which Williamson had been arguing for several years. By 1911, however, there were more urgent reasons than the opinions of an Assistant Political Officer for a new approach to the problem of the Assam Himalaya. To understand these it is necessary to consider a few years of Tibetan history.[27]

[26] Ibid. Vol. 13 is devoted almost entirely to the events which led up to Williamson's murder. For a popular, and not entirely accurate, account, see Hamilton (1912).

[27] The history of British policy towards Tibet from 1904 until 1914 is the subject of the forthcoming second volume of my *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, in which full references relating to my comments

Chinese penetration

In August 1904 Francis Younghusband led a British army to Lhasa. The ostensible reason for this was the refusal of the Tibetans to enter into any sort of communication with the Government of India. The real reason was that Lord Curzon was afraid that Russia might be establishing her influence in the Tibetan capital. The Lhasa venture was in some ways a fiasco. It annoyed the Russians, who made good diplomatic ammunition out of it. It upset the Liberals and was not popular with Balfour's Conservative Cabinet which had other worries. The outcome was that when Younghusband returned to India in October 1904 with an Anglo-Tibetan treaty in his pocket, he was reprimanded for having exceeded his instructions, and some of the more extreme provisions of the treaty were modified. In English political circles Tibet became a dirty word, and the Liberal Government of Campbell-Bannerman which came to power at the end of 1905 resolved to show that Britain had no aggressive ambitions towards Tibet whatsoever. Lord Morley's insistence on the policy of non-intervention in the Assam Himalaya was a product of this determination.

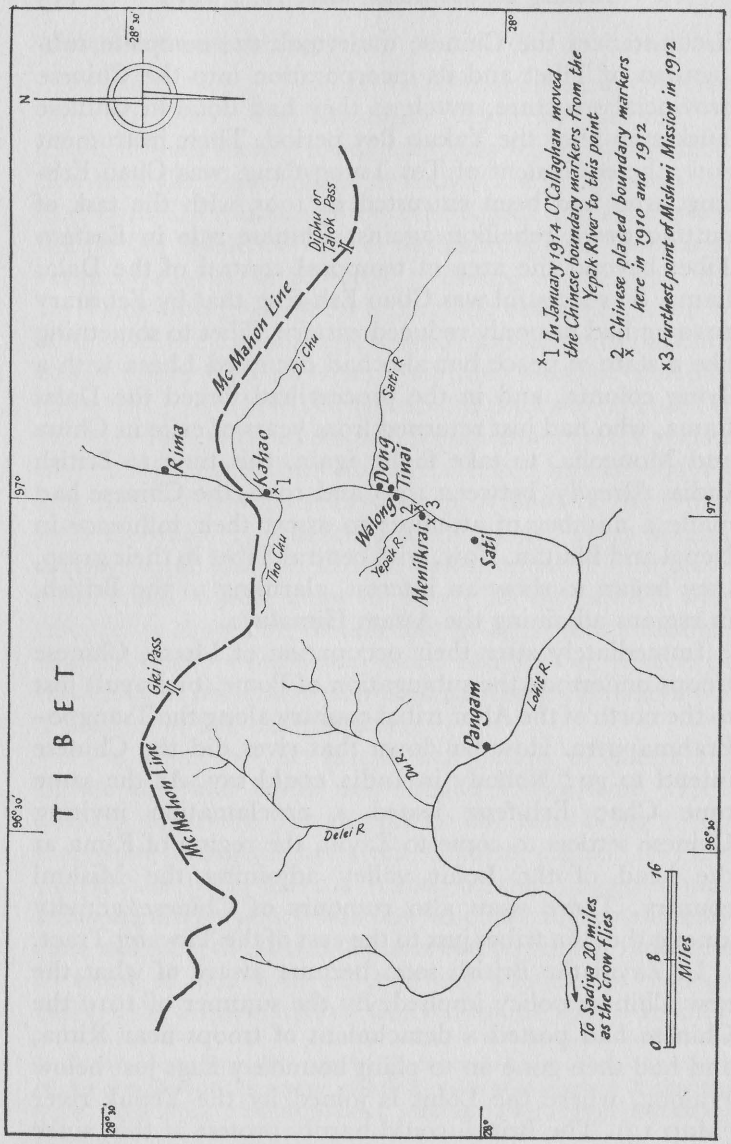
As a result of the British occupation of Lhasa the thirteenth Dalai Lama was obliged to flee from Tibet; and his departure put an end for the time being to the increasing independence from Chinese control of Tibet which had been the root cause of the Younghusband Mission. British policy was now to confirm Chinese influence in Tibet (the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906) and to refuse to deal with Tibet in any way except through China (the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907). In these

in the following pages will be made. There are no really adequate accounts of this period, but the reader will find much of interest in Richardson (1962); Bell (1924); Younghusband, *India and Tibet* (1910); Teichmann (1922).

circumstances the Chinese undertook the complete subjugation of Tibet and its incorporation into the Chinese provincial structure, much as they had done in Chinese Turkestan after the Yakub Bey period. Their instrument now, the equivalent of Tso Tsung-t'ang, was Chao Erh-feng, who had been entrusted in 1905 with the task of putting down rebellion against Chinese rule in Eastern Tibet beyond the area of temporal control of the Dalai Lama. So successful was Chao Erh-feng that by February 1910 he had not only reduced eastern Tibet to something like a state of peace but also had occupied Lhasa with a flying column, and in the process had forced the Dalai Lama, who had just returned from years of exile in China and Mongolia, to take flight again, this time to British India. Already, between 1905 and 1910, the Chinese had made a number of attempts to assert their influence in Nepal and Bhutan. Now, with central Tibet in their grasp, they began to show an interest, alarming to the British, in regions adjoining the Assam Himalaya.

Immediately after their occupation of Lhasa, Chinese troops undertook the subjugation of Pome (or Poyul) just to the north of the Abor tribal country along the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra. How far down that river did the Chinese intend to go? Nobody in India could say. At the same time Chao Erh-feng issued a proclamation inviting Chinese settlers to come to Zayul, the region of Rima at the head of the Lohit valley adjoining the Mishmi country. There were also rumours of Chinese activity among the Aka tribes just to the east of the Tawang Tract.

In Zayul the British soon became aware of what the new Chinese policy implied. By the summer of 1910 the Chinese had posted a detachment of troops near Rima, and had then gone on to plant boundary flags just below Walong, where the Lohit is joined by the Yepuk river (Map 13). The British could hardly protest at this, since



Map 13. The Lohit Valley at the Tibetan Border

they had long regarded the Walong area as marking the Tibetan border; but they felt they could scarcely stand by and watch when the Chinese went on to assert their sovereignty over the Mishmi tribes. In June 1911, when F. M. Bailey was travelling down the Lohit on the last stage of his adventurous overland journey from Peking to India, he met a number of Mishmi chiefs who were evidently on their way up to Rima to attend a tribal conference which the Chinese had summoned.[28] In 1911 it transpired that the Chinese had, in one Mishmi area at least, on the upper reaches of the Delei river, sent officials who were issuing to the Mishmi village headmen (chiefs of the 'monkey people' the Chinese called them) documents which stated that the Mishmis in question had tendered their submission to Chao Erh-feng.

The British react: the Abor expedition

Something had to be done. 'It seems to me', said Sir Lancelot Hare, Lt-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, on 24 November 1910, 'in view of the possibility of the Chinese pushing forward, that it would be a mistake not to put ourselves in a position to take up suitable strategic points of defence.'[29] Sir Arthur Hirtzel of the Political and Secret Department at the India Office put the situation clearly when he wrote on 12 January 1911:

> if anything goes wrong in Assam, there would be very voiceful public opinion against us. There are no European industries along the North West frontier, . . . But in Lakhimpur District there are over 70,000 acres of tea gardens turning out over 30,000,000 pounds of tea annually, and employing over 200 Europeans and over 100,000 Indians. The European capital risk in tea must be enormous, and there are other industries

[28] See Bailey (1945). See also I.O. Memo. B. 189, 'Chinese activity on the Mishmi border', 9 Sept. 1912.

[29] I.O., *Pol. External Files 1910*, vol. 13.

as well. . . . These gardens lie at the foot of the hills inhabited by savages; their defence rests with 1 battalion of native infantry and 1 battalion of military police (850 men). Think of the howl the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea![30]

Something had indeed to be done; but neither the Government of Lord Hardinge, who had just succeeded Lord Minto as Viceroy, nor the Cabinet in London were enthusiastic about a British forward move in Assam. Proposals to declare all the Mishmis under British protection—Mishmi chiefs had apparently requested this—were rejected, as was the idea of advancing northward the 'Outer Line' until it met the limits of effective Chinese control. There were many reasons for such reluctance. Bitter memories of what had followed Curzon's Tibetan policy, fear lest Russia would use any British advance towards Tibet as an excuse to demand a revision of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 in respect to Persia or Afghanistan, anxiety lest a conflict with Chinese interests would have repercussions on British trade in China, all these combined to create a mood of 'wait and see' most frustrating to the men on the spot, especially to Williamson. It was to find out what exactly was happening in the Abor country, and to investigate how far down the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra the Chinese had progressed in the course of their Pome campaign, that inspired him to set out on his fatal journey.[31] His tragic death provided the solution to the Assam problem, for all the desired measures against Chinese infiltration could be obtained under the guise of a punitive expedition.

This venture, which was mounted towards the end of

[30] Ibid.

[31] Williamson also wanted to investigate the legendary Tsangpo falls, then an object of much exploring interest: but the Chinese situation was his main objective.

1911 under the command of Major-General Hamilton Bower, gave birth to a number of daughter projects, the Miri Mission, the Mishmi Mission, and a host of Surveys which continued until 1913. The Abors were duly punished for their temerity, but this was almost incidental to the whole operation which was, as the instructions to its various elements make clear, aimed specifically at determining the extent of Chinese penetration and the correct line for a new boundary which should serve to keep the Chinese as far away from the Assam tea gardens as possible. The whole plan of campaign was phased with a similar project in the extreme north of Burma, where also since 1910 the Chinese had infiltrated into territory which the British felt was within their sphere but which they had not hitherto attempted to administer. Its ultimate objective was to define a border more or less along the mountain crests and main watersheds, to exercise British control 'of a loose political nature' up to that boundary, and, if the circumstances seemed propitious, to inform China of the new limits of British sovereignty.

The Abor Expedition scheme had its problems, not least the danger of attack from the rear, not so much from the hill tribesmen as from British Members of Parliament opposed to any extension of the British Empire. Between April and November 1911 the mounting Abor venture gave rise to at least twelve questions in the Commons and obliged the Government to issue a far from frank Blue Book. The Abor plan was rather vulnerable to parliamentary criticism because it brought to mind Section 55 of the Government of India Act 1858, which reads:

> Except for preventing or repelling actual invasion of His Majesty's Indian possessions, or under other sudden and urgent necessity, the revenues of India shall not, without the consent of both Houses of Parliament, be applicable to defray the expenses of any military operation carried on beyond the

external frontiers of such possessions by His Majesty's Forces charged upon such revenues.

It was hard, in cold blood, to say that the dealings of one or two Chinese officials with the 'monkey people' constituted an invasion of India, 'or other sudden and urgent necessity'. Where, moreover, were the external frontiers of India in this region? In the Mishmi country there were no frontiers at all beyond the boundary of administrative expediency. If Parliament started arguing about this, then the least that would happen would be that the Chinese would start raising claims openly, and the Russians would probably support them. The less said, indeed, about the Abor Expedition the better. Lord Hardinge's Government of India, at all events, was certainly not going to bring the matter before Parliament if it could help it. Section 55 of the Government of India Act of 1858, in fact, imposed upon the alignment of the Assam boundary a peculiar vagueness which it has never quite lost since.

By the end of 1913 the offshoots of the Abor Expedition had completely transformed the state of British knowledge of the Assam Himalaya.[32] The Miri Mission had explored the lower reaches of the Subansiri and had made its way up the Kamla, a major tributary, as far as Tali, where local opposition persuaded it to turn back. The Tsangpo–Brahmaputra, here known as the Dihang or Siang, had been explored all the way from the plains to the limits of Tibetan control, and so had the Dibong basin to its east. The Mishmi country had been explored not only up the Lohit but also along the Delei and Du rivers, major tributaries of the Lohit, and across the Lohit–Dibong watershed. The Chinese boundary markers near Walong had been inspected, and British markers put up beside them. Bailey and Morshead, in 1913, made an extremely

[32] See Burrard, iv (1914).

enterprising journey from the headwaters of the Dibong along the Tsangpo valley to the north of Tawang and then down to Assam through the Tawang Tract, being the first Europeans to travel in that district. Pritchard and Waterfield, in another epic journey, crossed from the Lohit into the headwaters of the Irrawaddy system in Burma, where Pritchard lost his life by drowning.[33] As a result of all this activity it was possible to provide a good map of most of the Assam Himalaya—there remained a few gaps in the survey, especially along the upper Subansiri[34]—upon which the McMahon Line was soon to be drawn. All this was the indirect result of Williamson's murder.

In 1912 the political situation in Tibet underwent another radical change. The outbreak of the Chinese Revolution in late 1911 had resulted in the murder of Chao Erh-feng, thus removing from Chinese policy in Tibet the iron will which had so much inspired it. Early in 1912 the Chinese troops at Lhasa, and those forces who had been struggling for nearly two years against the recalcitrant inhabitants of Pome, rebelled. By the end of the year all Chinese power in Tibet to a point just west

[33] Pritchard & Waterfield (1913).

[34] From the west of the Siyom basin to the Bhutanese border the British by 1914 had no detailed geographical information as to the country through which the McMahon alignment was to run other than that provided by Bailey and Morshead on their return to India in late 1913 (Map 11). The survey of Bailey and Morshead was made entirely from the Tibetan side, and there were sections of the McMahon alignment which these two travellers did not see. The region where the Subansiri approached the McMahon alignment was virtually a blank on the map, and up to the end of the Second World War no British officer had made his way up the Subansiri to the McMahon Line, though Migyitun, the last point in Tibet on the Subansiri-Tasri, had been visited by a number of European travellers coming through Tibet. I referred to this fact in my 'The Indo-Tibetan Border', *Austr. J. of Pol. & Hist.*, May 1960, and for my pains earned some 40 lines of critical footnote in Rao, in *Internat. & Comp. Law Q.*, Apr. 1962, p. 401. For the state of the Survey in this particular region I can but refer the reader to Bailey (1914) & (1957), and Fürer-Haimendorf, *Himalayan Barbary* (1955).

of Chamdo had disappeared and the Dalai Lama had returned home, convinced that of all his neighbours the British were his most useful friends. The Chinese pressure on the Assam border ceased to exist. The problem was no longer one of immediate urgency; rather the question was how to secure the Assam Himalaya from Chinese intervention at some fairly remote future period.

The Simla Conference

The collapse of Chinese power in Central Tibet in 1912 led inevitably to the Simla Conference of 1913–14. The steps by which this happened are complicated, and the published accounts of them serve mainly to confuse. In essence what happened was this. In August 1912 the British, grasping the opportunity of the decline of Chinese fortunes in Tibet, put pressure on the Government of the Chinese Republic of President Yuan Shih-kai to agree to a definition of the Chinese status in Tibet on the basis of the position before the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa of 1904. The British, so Sir John Jordan, the British Minister at Peking, informed the Chinese Government, thought the Chinese could have a Resident at Lhasa with an escort of no more than 300 men. They could claim suzerainty, but not sovereignty, over Tibet. They could advise the Tibetan Government, but they could not intervene directly in the internal administration of Tibet. If the Chinese agreed to limit their powers to this extent, the British would, so it was implied, use their good offices to persuade the Tibetans to accept the return of the Chinese Resident and to agree to remain, if rather nominally, within the Chinese sphere. It was essentially as mediators that the British found themselves host to Tibetan and Chinese delegations at Simla in October 1913; indeed, it was only as mediators that the British could reconcile their Tibetan policy with the Anglo-Russian Convention

of 1907, a point which Lord Morley emphasized in a speech in the House of Lords on 28 July 1913, when he described the British role in the forthcoming Conference as that of 'an honest broker'.[35]

The British, after exploring a number of possibilities, had decided that the best protection for their common border with Tibet in future was to make Tibet a genuine buffer state. Just as they at one time hoped that Sinkiang would serve to keep Russian territory from direct contact with Kashmir, so they now looked to Tibet to keep China from physical contact with Assam. The Simla Conference, as the chief British delegate, Sir Henry McMahon, guided its discussions, developed into a long Sino-Tibetan argument over the boundary between Chinese control and the Tibetan buffer. In these discussions McMahon seems to have deemed it advisable to introduce the complication of a secondary buffer. In 1912, with the Chinese Revolution, Mongolia declared its independence and promptly became, at least in British eyes, what would now be called a Russian satellite. At the very end of 1912 or beginning of 1913 the Mongolians made a treaty with Tibet, or so it was reported, and McMahon was not the only Englishman to believe these reports. It seemed that this treaty gave Mongolia the right, in certain conditions, to lend military assistance to Lhasa, a right which it was feared the Russians might exploit. Hence McMahon appears to have resolved to keep Lhasa-controlled Tibet separate from Mongolia by as much Chinese territory as possible. The Kansu 'corridor' was very narrow; therefore, McMahon may well have argued, why not take a leaf out of the Russian book and divide Tibet into two zones as Russia had Mongolia?[36] Outer Tibet would be autonomous

[35] H.L. Deb., 5th ser., vol. xiv, 28 July 1913.

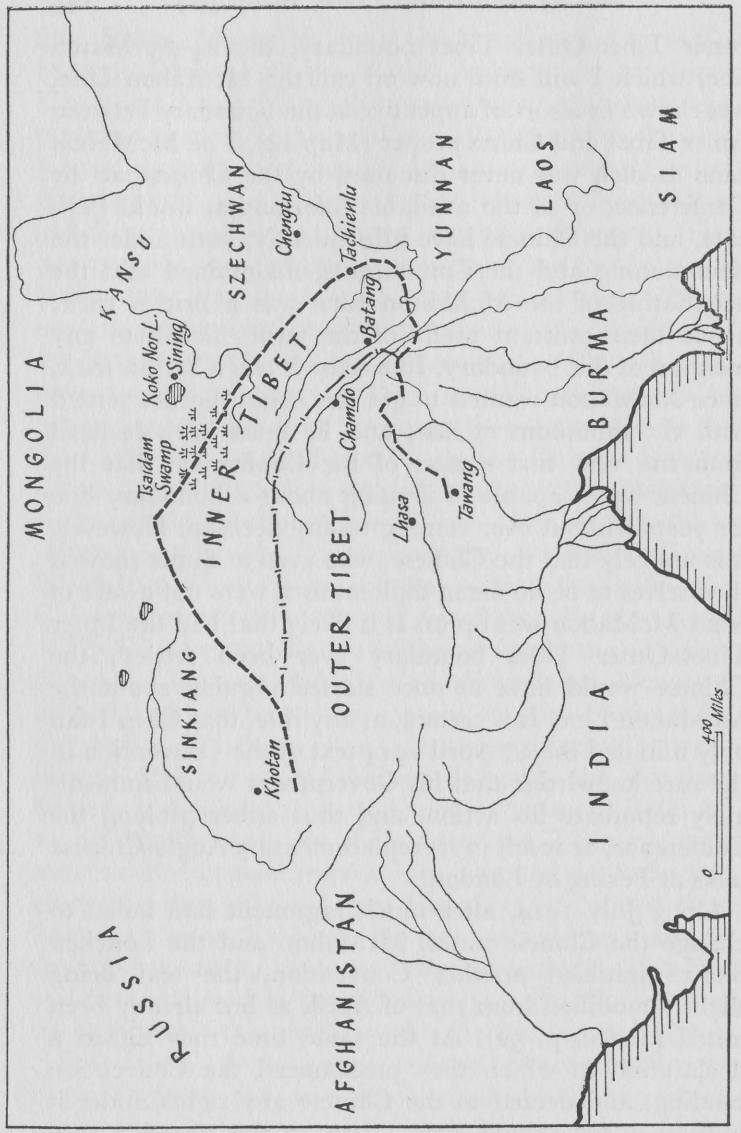
[36] Autonomous Outer Mongolia and Chinese-controlled Inner Mongolia. This division, unlike that of Tibet, had some basis in history and tradition.

like Outer Mongolia, and would thus be a buffer between China and the British Indian frontier. Inner Tibet, like Inner Mongolia, would be to all intents and purposes part of China, and would thus add to Chinese Kansu (recently the scene of rebellion against the Central Government) as a Chinese buffer between Outer Tibet and Russian-influenced Outer Mongolia (Map 14). This was perhaps the ultimate expression of the theory of the buffer state, and the scheme reads well on paper. However, in practice its complexity provided the occasion for the final breakdown of the Conference. The Chinese could not accept a definition of the Outer Tibet–Inner Tibet boundary which was at the same time agreeable to the Tibetans. When, on 27 April 1914, the Chinese delegate Chen I-fan initialed a text of a tripartite convention embodying a Tibetan-approved line—and he only did so under considerable moral pressure from Sir Henry McMahon, who was not a man to be trifled with—the Chinese Government promptly repudiated the agreement.

The Chinese repudiation of the 27 April 1914 Convention was a blow to McMahon's buffer scheme. However, he had meanwhile secured a second means of defence for the Assam Himalaya in a separate agreement between himself and the chief Tibetan delegate, the Lönchen Shatra, embodied in an exchange of notes at Delhi on 24–25 March 1914. By these notes the Tibetans, with some small expressed reservations, accepted a frontier line along the crest of the Assam Himalaya as defined on a large-scale map, 8 miles to the inch, which was based on the surveys arising from the Abor Expedition. This line will be considered in detail below (p. 148). The notes of 24–25 March 1914, together with the accompanying map (in two sheets), do not appear to have been communicated to the Chinese: but, on a much smaller-scale map which served the Conference as the basis for discussions of the

Inner Tibet–Outer Tibet boundary, the 24–25 March line, which I will from now on call the McMahon Line, was shown as a sort of appendix to the boundary between Inner Tibet and China proper (Map 14). The McMahon Line as such was never discussed by the Chinese at the Conference, or so the available information would indicate, and the Chinese have subsequently, both under the Kuomintang and the Communists, maintained that the negotiating of the McMahon Line was a British trick: hence their constant prefix of the term 'illegal' to any mention of this boundary. In a sense it *was* a British trick, since McMahon wanted to get the Assam border settled with the minimum of fuss; and he must have realized from the very first session of the Conference that the Chinese were capable of arguing about a boundary line for years without ever coming to any decision. However, it is unlikely that the Chinese, who even at Simla showed themselves to be no mean diplomatists, were not aware of what McMahon was up to. It is likely that had the Inner Tibet–Outer Tibet boundary ever been settled, the Chinese would have at once started arguing about the McMahon Line. It is certain, at any rate, that Chen I-fan only initialed the 27 April 1914 text of the Convention in the sure knowledge that his Government would immediately repudiate his action, and thus either prolong the Conference, or result in its replacement by Anglo-Chinese talks at Peking or London.

On 3 July 1914, after much argument had failed to change the Chinese mind, McMahon and the Lönchen Shatra initialed another Convention, the text being slightly modified from that of April, as has already been noted (above, p. 52). At the same time they signed a declaration in which they pronounced the Convention binding, and denied to the Chinese any rights under it until they too should agree. Also on this occasion they



MAP 14. BOUNDARIES OF INNER AND OUTER TIBET AS SHOWN ON MAP APPENDED TO SIMLA CONVENTION OF 3 JULY 1914

signed a fresh set of Trade Regulations governing Indo-Tibetan commerce and replacing the Trade Regulations of 1908, which in turn had replaced those of 1893. Involved here is the whole history of Anglo-Tibetan relations. As far as the Assam border was concerned, the declaration of 3 July 1914 was important in that it bound the Tibetans to agree, at some future occasion, to accept the return to Lhasa of the symbol of Chinese suzerainty, the Chinese Resident with his escort. Only thus could the delicate structure of buffers within buffers be preserved if and when the Chinese should be persuaded to adhere to the Convention. The Simla Conference has given rise to much controversy of late, and it is not easy to make definite statements about it. One thing is sure, however; it left behind it a great deal of unfinished business.

9

Administering the McMahon Line, 1914–47

THE old 'Outer Line' boundary of the Assam Himalaya met the British–Bhutan border just south of the 27th parallel of latitude. The new McMahon boundary met Bhutan north of Tawang at lat. 27° 45′: from here it ran eastwards across the Nyamjang river to the 92nd meridian of east longitude, whence it followed a north-easterly alignment across the upper reaches of the Subansiri river and its major tributary the Chayul Chu to about long. 94° 40′, lat. 29° 20′. From here the boundary ran south-east to the Kepang Pass and the crossing of the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra just south of the village of Mongku. East of the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra (or Dihang–Siang) crossing the boundary looped northwards to enclose the entire basin of the Dibang river system and then ran south to just below lat. 28° 30′ and just west of long. 96° 30′. Hence the line continued in an easterly direction, bounding the basin of the Delei and Du rivers, tributaries of the Lohit, until it met the Lohit itself above Kahao, a point about fourteen miles as the crow flies to the north of Walong, the region of the previously accepted Tibetan frontier point. From the Lohit crossing the boundary continued along watersheds until it crossed the Taron river, a tributary of the Nmaikka, which in turn flowed into the Irrawaddy. The Taron was crossed at about long. 98° 15′, lat. 27° 40′, and a short distance south of this point the

line came to an end at the Isu Razi Pass. From east of the Lohit to its terminus the McMahon Line divided Burma from Tibet.[1]

Tawang and Walong

Two points are immediately apparent from the description of this alignment. All of Tawang is now within the British Indian Empire, including the Tawang monastery and the winter residence of the Tsöna Dzongpöns. In agreeing to this the Lönchen Shatra had apparently given up claim to several hundred square miles of territory which until 1914 the British had been accustomed to look on as Tibetan. Secondly, on the Lohit the Tibetan boundary had retreated northwards from the Walong area, accepted by most nineteenth-century travellers as the meeting point of Tibet and the Mishmi country, to above Kahao villege, with the consequent loss to Tibet of about twenty miles of the Lohit valley. What is the explanation for these changes in what can only be described as the 'traditional boundary'?

The political conditions which made the McMahon boundary necessary to the British also dictated quite clearly that Tibetan, and hence nominally Chinese,[2] territory should not extend to within eleven miles of Udalguri on the edge of the Brahmaputra valley. From the moment when first in 1910 the Chinese pressure on the Assam Himalaya became clear, British strategists in India had been advising that the new boundary alignment should take in the Tawang Tract up to the Se La. The Se La, it seemed, was a good defensive point in a convenient boundary range sufficiently far north from the

[1] I have based this description of the McMahon boundary on maps 21 and 22 of *Atlas*, and reference map 6 in *Peking Review* (1962).

[2] Note 1 appended to the Simla Convention, under negotiation when the 24–25 March 1914 notes were exchanged, reads: 'It is understood by the High Contracting Parties that Tibet forms part of Chinese territory',

Assam plains to eliminate any harmful effects from Chinese influence to the north. Tawang was so clearly part of Tsöna district in Tibet, and the hundreds of monks in its great monastery so closely connected to Drebung Monastery at Lhasa, a major force in Tibetan politics, that its occupation by the British must have seemed unthinkable. Why, then, did McMahon take it? There are reasons to believe that this decision was made actually in the middle of the Simla Conference, earlier proposals indicating a Se La alignment, and that the cause was F. M. Bailey's report on his return in late 1913 from his journey along the Tsangpo which included a visit to Tawang.[3] This showed most clearly, as has already been pointed out, the nature of Tawang monastery's own control over all but one village to the south of the Se La; and, no doubt, McMahon concluded with characteristic logic that British administration below the Se La would be easier if Tawang monastery was also under British control. There were probably other reasons. Tawang, resentful of the loss of its estates, might block the trade route in which considerable commercial promise was detected. A Se La boundary, moreover, might open up to Chinese infiltration an already exposed Bhutanese eastern flank. For these reasons, I think, the decision to take over Tawang was made; and it subsequently proved to be a serious mistake.

The reason for the advance of the boundary north of Walong was simple indeed. During the course of the surveys arising from the Abor Expedition it was discovered that up the Di Chu stream, which flowed from the east into the Lohit some short distance above Walong, was a practicable route to the Diphu or Talok Pass leading into the headwaters of the Irrawaddy system of Burma.[4] The

[3] I must hasten to add that Bailey does not in his report, or in any of his other writings, recommend the British acquisition of Tawang.

[4] See e.g. Woodman (1962), p. 511.

British in these remote northern portions of their Burmese possessions had already suffered considerable anxiety as the result of Chinese infiltration from Yunnan: there seemed no point in allowing them, at some possible future time, an approach to northern Burma from Tibet. Hence the McMahon boundary was drawn north of the Di Chu stream. McMahon and his advisers felt, and not without justification, that Tibetan claims to the Walong area, in which one or two Tibetan families lived but in which also the Mishmis kept their cattle, were not so substantial as to overrule the arguments for a better strategic border alignment.[5]

Pemako

Apart from its inclusion within India of Tawang and Walong, the McMahon Line conflicted surprisingly little with Tibetan concepts as to their sphere of influence. In two regions, however, its alignment raised problems of future significance. At the point where it crossed the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra the McMahon Line traversed a district of somewhat complex political allegiances. The independent pretensions of Pome have already been noticed, and the fact that into Pemako, adjacent to the line here, settlers from eastern Bhutan had in the nineteenth century migrated, apparently in search of some

[5] For much of my information about the origins and administration of the McMahon Line, I am indebted to Reid (1942). Without the assistance of this book the writing of this section would not have been possible. Sir Robert Reid, while Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942, appears to have devoted his leisure hours to gathering from the Shillong archives all he could find on border questions. In his book, which he deliberately based on Mackenzie's great work to which reference has already been made and which Reid was setting out to bring up to date, the author prints a large number of important documents almost in their entirety. Thanks to this a fairly complete set of documents is available for the period from 1912, when the British archives are closed by the application of the 'fifty-year rule', until 1941.

Buddhistic Promised Land, and in so doing had displaced Abor tribesmen. Arising from this process the Pemako authorities had acquired a measure of influence over Abor tribes as far down the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra (here called the Siang or Dihang) as the villages of Simong and Karko. Karko was, as the crow flies, some forty miles below the McMahon Line where it crossed the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra. In 1905, in reprisal for an Abor raid, the Pemako people had sent a force down the river as far as the village of Jido, fourteen miles below the McMahon Line as the crow flies, and had built a fort there. McMahon was quite aware of these problems. They had been noted by some of the British exploring parties, and Bailey, in his *Report* (p. 2), had discussed them in some detail. No doubt McMahon argued that the people of Pemako, being of Bhutanese origin, were not really Tibetans, and that the nearest Tibetan district which might object, Pome, claimed to be independent of Lhasa. A line had to be drawn somewhere, and the crossing point of the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra selected by McMahon seemed to be the best compromise between Tibetan rights and British strategic needs.

Finally, at the crossing of the river Subansiri and its tributary the Chayul Chu, the McMahon Line also raised some problems. This region of the boundary was not visited by any surveying party from the south during the years of activity resulting from the Abor Expedition. Indeed, no official of the Indian Government actually went all the way up the Subansiri from the plains to the Tibetan border until several years after the Second World War. The Miri Mission, which it was hoped would do this, was turned back some distance from the border by hostile tribesmen. The survey of this section of boundary line, therefore, depended upon the work of some of the native explorers of the Indian Survey (the Pundits) and on the

map produced by Morshead, Bailey's companion in 1913. All this work had been done from the north. Bailey had concluded that Migyitun on the upper Subansiri, here called the Tsari Chu, was the last point of Tibetan administration.[6] The line, therefore, was run just south of this place.

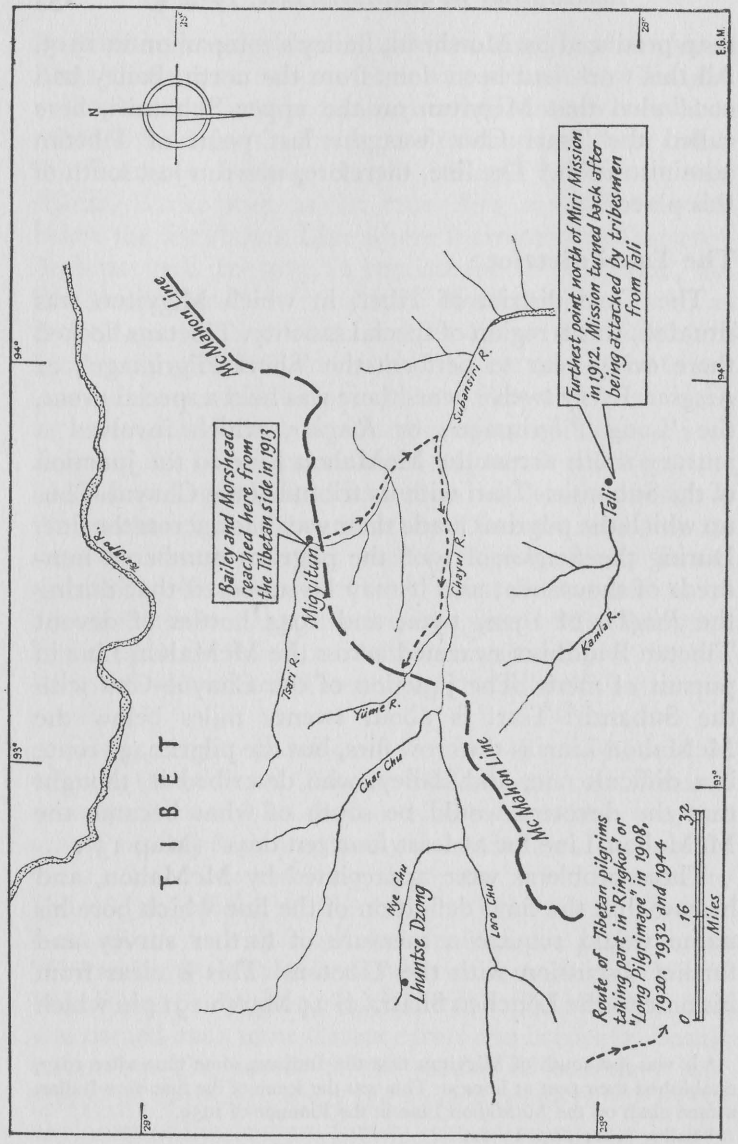
The Tsari district

The Tsari district of Tibet, in which Migyitun was situated, was a region of special sanctity. Tibetans flocked there every year to perform the 'Short Pilgrimage', or *Kingkor*. Every twelve years there was held a special event, the 'Long Pilgrimage', or *Ringkor*, which involved a journey south across the McMahon Line to the junction of the Subansiri–Tsari with its tributary the Chayul–Chu, up which the pilgrims made their way back across the line. During the *Ringkor* of 1908 the pilgrims numbered hundreds of thousands; and it may be supposed that during the *Ringkor* of 1920, 1932, and 1944 hordes of devout Tibetan Buddhists swarmed across the McMahon Line in pursuit of merit. The junction of the Chayul–Chu with the Subansiri–Tsari is about twenty miles below the McMahon Line as the crow flies, but the pilgrimage route is a difficult one, and Bailey, who described it, thought that the devotees would be south of what became the McMahon Line for at least fourteen days[7] (Map 15).

These problems were appreciated by McMahon, and he saw that the final definition of the line which bore his name would require a measure of further survey and further discussion with the Tibetans. This is clear from his note to the Lönchen Shatra of 24 March 1914 in which

[6] It was just south of Migyitun that the Indians, some time after 1947, established their post at Longju. This was the scene of the first Sino-Indian armed clash on the McMahon Line in the summer of 1959.

[7] Bailey (1914), pp. 10–12.



Map 15. The Upper Subansiri, showing Tibetan Pilgrim Route below McMahon Line

he formally proposed the boundary. The note reads as follows:

In February last you accepted the India–Tibet frontier from the Isu Razi Pass to the Bhutan frontier, as given in the map (two sheets) of which two copies are herewith attached, subject to the confirmation of your government and the following conditions:—

(*a*) The Tibetan ownership of private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed.

(*b*) If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a days march of the British side of the frontier, they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly.

I understand that your Government have now agreed to this frontier subject to the above two conditions. I shall be glad to learn definitely from you that this is the case.

You wished to know whether certain dues now collected by the Tibetan Government at Tsöna Jong and in Kongbu and Kham from the Monpas and Lopas for articles sold may still be collected. Mr. Bell has informed you that such details will be settled in a friendly spirit, when you have furnished him with further information, which you have promised.

The final settlement of this India–Tibet frontier will help to prevent causes of future dispute and thus cannot fail to be of great advantage to both Governments.[8]

[8] The terms of this document require some explanation which it seems best to confine to a footnote.

The reference to Tibetan private estates clearly means that the Lönchen Shatra wants to make sure that the Tsöna Dzongpöms and the Tawang monastery are not deprived of their revenues from their possessions south of the Se La. The sacred places are south of the McMahon Line in the Migyitun region on the Subansiri-Tsari.

The reference to the Tibetan Government at Tsöna continuing to collect dues is clearly a face-saving device whereby the Tibetans can go on taxing in the Tawang Tract as before, while the British have acquired the titular sovereignty over this region. Similarly, the Kongbu authority was concerned with revenue collection down the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra, and the Kham authority with the administration of Zayul which until now the

How did the Tibetans see the McMahon Line agreement? From the above analysis of the 24 March 1914 note it is clear that they thought the line, while involving the loss of some of the theoretical symbols of Tibetan sovereignty, in no way interfered with the traditional conduct of Tibetan administration in those places where it extended across the new boundary. There is good reason to believe, moreover, that the Tibetans thought that the McMahon Line was but one part of a wider agreement. In return for adjustments along the Indo-Tibetan border the British would secure for the Dalai Lama a satisfactory and stable Sino-Tibetan border in the east.[9] With the collapse of the Simla Conference the British had clearly failed to do this, and it seems probable that the Lhasa Government then thought that it was free to ignore the

Tibetans had considered to have extended to just below Walong on the Lohit.

Mr Bell, later Sir Charles Bell, was McMahon's chief adviser on Tibetan affairs at the Simla Conference, and it was he who actually negotiated with the Lönchen Shatra.

A careful examination of this note suggests that Tibetan acceptance of the McMahon Line was not unqualified. What McMahon is really saying here is: 'accept our British sovereignty south of the line, and we will do nothing to interfere with your traditional ways of business and revenue collection. If you have any problems, feel free to talk them over with Mr Bell, who will hear you out with sympathy'. In the terms of McMahon's concept of buffer states, this was a very reasonable arrangement. A theoretical limit had been set to Chinese expansion with no administrative cost to the British; though, as we shall see, McMahon did feel that there should be some British supervision. The note, in fact, by creating its fictions as to the nature of Tibetan interest south of the Line, brought Tibetan districts like Tawang under the same sort of British authority as applied in Bhutan, for example. The note, in conclusion, gave the British control over the foreign policy in Tawang and other such areas by the device of calling tax 'rent'. A similar approach had been made by the British to other such issues in the past: for example, in the 1890 Anglo-Chinese Convention over Sikkim the Maharaja of Sikkim was allowed to continue to send letters and presents to the Chinese Resident in Lhasa, as a good Chinese tributary should, only now these were described not as tribute but as symbols of the Maharaja's personal respect.

[9] So, at any rate, the Tibetans argued to Gould in 1936 (see Reid, p. 296).

24–25 March 1914 notes. It was not hindered in coming to this conclusion, as will be seen, by many signs of British activity in Tawang and other parts of the Assam Himalayas in the years immediately following 1914. The British might possibly have argued that the Sino-Tibetan border for which the Tibetans had hoped in 1914 was in fact secured through British mediation in 1918. In October that year Eric Teichman, of the British Consular Service in China, negotiated in eastern Tibet the truce of Rongbatsa which put an end for a while to the Sino-Tibetan war which had been raging since 1912. However, at this moment the Tibetans were winning, and it was the Chinese side which asked Teichman to intervene; so his mediation could hardly have earned much gratitude in Lhasa.[10]

How did the Chinese regard this agreement? Its terms were not officially published until 1929, though they could not have caused much surprise by then in Peking. The Chinese then, and since, have denied that the 24–25 March 1914 notes had any validity; and, from their point of view, for sound reasons. With the failure of the Simla Conference the McMahon Line agreement stood without any valid form of Chinese adhesion. To the Chinese it implied that Tibet had assumed the right to make treaties on her own behalf, and with this that she had implicitly, if not explicitly, claimed full sovereignty in international law. Tibet may indeed have attained such a status; but no Chinese was going to admit it. It would be foolish to expect China to abandon her Tibetan claims for which she had struggled so long. This point became one of particular importance following the Chinese Communist 'Liberation' of Tibet and the suppression of the subsequent Tibetan revolts. If Tibet had been a sovereign state in 1914, with full treaty-making powers, then she was a sovereign state in 1950: and the Chinese were indeed

[10] Teichman (1922), p. 168.

aggressors. So they may well have been, but it would be asking a lot to expect them to confess it. Hence, while it seems just possible that a Chinese Government could renegotiate a boundary line following the McMahon alignment—this did in fact happen in the case of Burmese boundary—it is quite inconceivable that the present Chinese Communist régime, any more than that of Chiang Kai-shek, could accept the McMahon alignment because it felt bound by the 1914 negotiations. Even before the Second World War Chinese maps were showing the northern boundary of Assam as following the old 'Outer Line'. This meant that the Assam Himalaya was shown as part of Tibet, and hence, since the Chinese claimed Tibet, as part of China.

We must now examine what the British did about the McMahon Line and how they reacted to these Chinese and Tibetan attitudes. On the eve of the Simla Conference the Indian Government had already taken some administrative measures to ensure that the tribes of the Assam hills were not neglected in the way that they had been before Williamson's murder. The hills were in 1912–13 divided into three tracts, the Western, Central, and Eastern Sections of the North East Frontier, under the supervision of Political Officers. W. C. M. Dundas was placed in charge of the Central and Eastern Sections, while the Western Section was assigned to G. A. Nevill. These basic divisions were modified with time, and new names given to them to the confusion of the historian. Essentially, however, they form the administrative foundation on which was eventually built by independent India, the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). These original divisions emerged from the operations of the Abor Expedition, so NEFA can in a very real sense be described as the end-product of a punitive campaign and the monument to Noel Williamson.

The Tawang venture

While the Simla Conference was in progress British officers were sent into the two regions where the Tibetan boundary, as opposed to the old 'Outer Line', was to be modified, at Tawang and by Walong on the Lohit. The Tawang venture, which followed an impressive demonstration in Aka and Dafla tribal territory in the cold weather of 1913–14, the so-called 'Aka Promenade', was entrusted to Nevill accompanied by R. S. Kennedy, a doctor (McMahon believed in wooing the tribes with medicine). Its objectives were to look into the prospects of Tawang as a trade route, to add to Bailey's account of the McMahon boundary here, to investigate relations between Tawang and the neighbouring *Loba* tribes, and to report on the exact nature of Tibetan rule. Nevill was not told to inform the Tawang people of their inclusion in the British Empire, though in fact, when he reached Tawang on 1 April 1914, the area had been British for a week. Nevill found, as had Bailey before him, that Tawang was indeed a part of Tibet. The Abbot and chief officials of the monastery were appointed by Lhasa; the Tsöna Dzongpöns had authority over the whole region, though the actual governing south of the Se La, except in Sengedzong, was carried out by officials appointed by the monastery. Nevill came to three important conclusions. First, that any further attempt to prevent the Tawang monastery from raising revenue from the Monbas of the Tawang Tract, and which the population found a real burden, would be accompanied by much trouble. Second, that British police posts should be established at least up to the Se La to protect the Monbas from tribal raids. Third, that a British officer should be stationed for at least several months at Tawang. Nevill's proposals, however, were not even forwarded to the Viceroy. The outbreak of

the First World War made tribal affairs seem trivial indeed.

On the Lohit a road had been under construction since the days of the Mishmi Mission in early 1912, when the Indian Government had considered establishing a British military post as near as possible to the point where the Chinese had placed their boundary markers in 1910. Progress was very slow, and by 1914 had come to a standstill long before it had reached the boundary area. Again, the war resulted in the Lohit road scheme being shelved. In January 1914 T. P. M. O'Callaghan, who was assistant to Dundas in administering the Eastern Section of the frontier, was sent up the Lohit on what is usually called the 'Walong Promenade'. Just below Walong, by the Yepuk river, he found the old Chinese boundary markers of 1910, and a fresh one which had been put up in 1912 by the Chinese Republic just before the Chinese had been expelled from Tibet. This was a pine plank standing beneath a thatched roof and bearing an inscription in Chinese, Tibetan, and English which read: 'The Southern Boundary of Chuan Tien Tsa-yu [Zayul] of C.R. [Chinese Republic] established by Special Commissioner Chiong Fong Chi and Magistrate of Tsa-yu-kes Win Chin-tsa-yu, June 9th 1912'. These markers O'Callaghan removed; he took them upstream, and deposited them in the jungle near Kahao, just below the McMahon boundary[11] (Map

[11] O'Callaghan's action was revealed, rather surprisingly, in a lecture to the Royal United Services Institution, published in its *Journal* (1920), p. 514; see also Reid, p. 251. It is a pity that O'Callaghan removed this inscription. It would have provided clear proof that in 1912 the Chinese Republic accepted a Tibetan boundary far to the north of the old 'Outer Line', and thus would have removed much force from their claims to sovereignty right down to the foothills. This marker could well have provided a fixed point at the eastern end of the Sino-Indian boundary in the same way that the Karakoram Pass has anchored the western terminus.

F. M. Bailey tells me that when he first found the Chinese markers near Walong, in the summer of 1911, he considered taking them down. He decided not to because he thought that this was quite a good place for the Chinese to have a boundary, and it was best to let well enough alone. So also seems to have thought Williamson, who saw the markers in early 1911, and Dundas, who inspected them in early 1912.

13). He then went on to Rima where he was most cordially welcomed by the Tibetan officials and where he found no trace remaining of Chinese influence. He returned to urge most strongly that construction of the road up the Lohit be continued and the proposed British post near Walong built. The Lohit, he thought, could become an important trade route. His advice fell on deaf ears.

After this initial burst of activity, the Assam Himalaya became a real backwater so far as British administration was concerned. In Tawang the Tibetans went on just as they had before, probably in the belief that the British had forgotten the 1914 agreement. No attention was paid to Nevill's warning in 1928 that

> there is no doubt that as soon as China settles down this Tibetan frontier will become of great importance. China still has its eyes on Tibet, and in Lhasa the pro-Chinese party is growing in influence and should China gain control of Tibet, the Tawang country is particularly adapted for a secret and easy entrance into India. Russia is also trying to establish her influence in Tibet, and, if successful, could safely and secretly send her emissaries into India by this route.[12]

In 1936 the Tibetans were still administering and taxing the Tawang Tract: indeed, nothing at all had happened since 1914 to make them change. But by now the publication of Chinese maps showing all the Assam Himalaya as part of Chinese Tibet had begun to alarm the Government of India. The Assam Government observed in September 1936 that:

> The Government of India consider that some effective steps should be taken to challenge activities which may be extended

[12] Reid, p. 291. For British policy towards the Assam Himalayas at this period see also Dunbar (1932), pp. 283–7.

to a claim on behalf of China for Tawang itself, or even Bhutan and Sikkim. They therefore propose to demand from the Tibetan Government, which has recently reaffirmed the McMahon Line, that collection of revenue for the latter Government in the Tawang area should be discontinued, and the question whether it will be necessary to introduce Indian administration to replace Tibetan officials in that area has been left for further consideration in the light of Mr. Gould's report on the conclusion of his mission to Lhasa. The suggestion which has been made to this Government . . . [of Assam] . . . is that it is highly desirable to emphasise the interest of British India in the Tawang area either by actual tours or by collecting the revenue ourselves, since the mere reproduction of the McMahon Line on Survey of India maps would be insufficient to correct false impressions which have gained ground in the years since 1914. The continued exercise of jurisdiction by Tibet in Tawang and the area north of Tawang might enable China, or still worse, might enable any other power which may in future be in a position to assert authority over Tibet, to claim prescriptive rights over a part of the territory recognised as within India by the 1914 Convention. In taking any steps of the nature contemplated it would be necessary to make it very clear that there is no intention to interfere with the purely monastic collection of the Tawang monastery.[13]

McMahon's subtle scheme of buffers and nuances of sovereignty could hardly have fallen on worse days.

In 1937, as a result of these arguments, Sir Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam, noting that Tawang, 'though undoubtedly British . . . has been controlled by Tibet, and none of its inhabitants have any idea that they are not Tibetan subjects', instructed Captain G. S. Lightfoot, Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract (as the Western Section was now called), to go up to Tawang in 1938 and collect a tax, thus demonstrating for the first time that the

[13] Reid, pp. 294–5.

area was in fact under British sovereignty. Lightfoot was to counter the Tibetan argument that the McMahon Line boundary had only been agreed to consequent upon the securing of a satisfactory Sino-Tibetan boundary, as Basil Gould had recently been told by the Lhasa Government.[14]

Lightfoot reached Tawang on 30 April 1938. The Tibetan Government promptly protested to Basil Gould, the British Political Officer, Sikkim, who had responsibility for the conduct of Anglo-Tibetan relations, and demanded that Lightfoot withdraw. Gould refused. In Tawang Lightfoot found the Tibetans collecting taxes before his very eyes, and the local authorities asked him to go home. On his return Lightfoot proposed, and with the support of Sir Robert Reid, that the Tibetans should be made to withdraw all their officials in Tawang to north of the McMahon Line. He also suggested that Tibetan influence in the Tawang monastery should be broken, that the structure of Tawang taxation be drastically revised, that local councils (*panchayats*) be set up, and that British officials be stationed permanently at Tawang and Dirangdzong. The Government of India, however, declaring that they were averse to 'any action which would commit them to permanent occupation and further expenditure', rejected Lightfoot and Reid's proposals. They refused to allow Lightfoot to return at once for another tour in Tawang. When the Second World War broke out they had still not decided what to do about Tawang, and the Tibetans were behaving as before.[15]

The Dihang valley

On the central section of the Assam Himalayan frontier, where the Tsangpo–Brahmaputra cuts through the hills,

[14] Ibid. pp. 295–6.

[15] Ibid. pp. 297–302. See also Kingdon Ward, in *JRCAS* (1938), pp. 614–15. Kingdon Ward was very critical of British inaction in the Assam Himalaya, and warned of the impending Chinese threat.

the British between the two world wars were hardly more active than they had been in Tawang. In 1928, after an abortive attempt to resist the establishment of Lhasa authority, the Chief of Pome fled across the McMahon Line down the Dihang, and eventually made his way to Sadiya. It then became apparent that this part of the boundary was very disturbed and that the Tibetans, in an attempt to restore order, were sending forces across the line for a considerable distance (Map 12). They were, it later transpired, levying taxes and demanding labour from the inhabitants of the Dihang valley as far south as Karko. In 1937 the Abor inhabitants of the village of Riga refused to pay tribute to a tax-gathering party (or blackmail-levying band) from north of the line. Riga is, as the crow flies, fifty miles south of the McMahon Line, and twice that distance by land and river. As a result, British Political Officers began to tour up the Dihang deep into Abor country. In 1940 and 1941 British armed posts were established at Karko and Riga; but here again the outbreak of war temporarily distracted the attention of the Government of India from frontier problems.[16]

On the Lohit, too, after 1914 there was a long period of inaction. It was not until 1937 that the Assam Government, guided by Sir Robert Reid, turned its attention again to the project of the road up the Lohit to the Tibetan border. Reid saw in this scheme a profitable way to tap the great wool production of eastern Tibet. In January 1940, to investigate the prospects of this road, now generally called the 'Rima Road', Godfrey, the Political Officer for the Sadiya Frontier Tract, went up the Lohit to Rima, the first British official visit here since O'Callaghan's tour some twenty-six years earlier. He found the Rima people very eager for the road to be built, along which they thought much trade would go which now took

[16] Reid, pp. 257–62.

the Sikkim route between India and Tibet. Here again, the war intervened to delay action on proposals involving the diversion of men, money, and materials from the major needs of the emergency.[17]

British post-war policy

In 1943, partly as a result of the lesson which the Japanese had taught the Government of India on the vulnerability to invasion of the jungles and hills of the eastern frontier of India, British policy in the tribal areas of the Assam Himalaya once more regained momentum. It was now resolved to set in hand the 'task of making the [Simla] Convention boundary good', and this was entrusted to J. P. Mills. A sense of urgency was created by the publication of more official Chinese maps embodying territorial claims right down to the pre-1914 'Outer Line', and by the realization that, with Allied victory in the Far East, China would for the first time in many years be free of Japanese attack. It was generally accepted that the end of the war would reveal a more aggressively expansionist and irredentist China than there had been since the late Manchu and early Republican days; though few could at that time have foreseen the Communist China which we know today.[18]

Mills placed armed posts up the Lohit to the McMahon border, and examined plans for the construction of a motor road from Sadiya to Rima.[19] Between 1943 and 1945 F. P. Mainprice, who was placed in charge of the

[17] Ibid. pp. 264–5.

[18] For the rest of this section I have relied mainly on the works by Fürer-Haimendorf, Bower, Mills, Baveja, Sharma, Shukla, Baruah, and Roy cited in the Bibliography, as well as Kingdon Ward, in *JRCAS* (1951), Elwin, in *Geog. Mag.* (1956) and his *Philosophy for NEFA* (1959).

[19] By 1950 only thirty miles of road, starting at Sadya, had in fact been built. The Lohit valley is not the easiest terrain in which to build roads. In places its sides are very steep, and the monsoon causes severe landslides.

Lohit valley, carried out a detailed study of the Mishmi tribes in this region, and managed to win the friendship of many of these extremely difficult people.[20] In the Dihang valley area British military patrols were sent up each year to turn back the Tibetan tax-collectors, whom Mills later described as 'really just bandits'. In the Subansiri region a policy of slow penetration by winning tribal goodwill and acquiring accurate information about tribal customs and economy was initiated. In 1944 and 1945 C. von Fürer-Haimendorf explored much of the lower Subansiri and its tributaries, extending the knowledge gained by the Miri Mission of 1912, though, like the Miri Mission, he failed to make his way right up to the McMahon Line. In this region, by establishing government trading posts in the hills and by employing tribesmen as porters and labourers, Apa Tanis, Miris, and Daflas began to be aware of the meaning of the term India. Fürer-Haimendorf's work here was subsequently continued by Lt Col. F. N. Betts, whose wife, under the name Ursula Graham Bower, has given us some fascinating accounts of tribal life in the Assam hills. In the Tawang Tract, by 1947 British armed posts had been established in the country to the south of the Se La, and Dirandzong had become an administrative centre. By the time of the transfer of power, however, the British had not yet tackled the problem of Tawang itself.

By August 1947, therefore, the British had laid the groundwork for making good the McMahon Line; but they had by no means completed the task. Tawang was still under *de facto* Tibetan administration. The loyalties of the hill tribes had been touched, but far from won. An enormous amount of road-building, of establishing trading and administrative posts, and, above all, of training administrators in the ways of running a tribal frontier,

[20] Mills, in *J. Rl Anthropological Inst.* (1952).

was still required. Urged on by the Communist victory in China and the subsequent Chinese occupation of Tibet, the Indian Republic continued the work at an accelerated pace. The entire Assam frontier area was reorganized, and the North East Frontier Agency, as it is now known, was created, dedicated, so Prime Minister Nehru said, to the determination 'to help the tribal people to grow according to their own genius and traditions', and in no way 'to impose anything on them'. NEFA, while constitutionally part of Assam, came under the direct control of the Central Government through the Ministry of External Affairs. To staff it, in 1956 the Indian Frontier Administrative Service was established. In 1951 under NEFA an Indian official was at last stationed permanently at Tawang, thus bringing to an end the only remaining pocket of Tibetan control south of the McMahon Line. All this, however, was rather late in the day: it would have been much better, from the Indian point of view, if all that was done between 1943 and 1956, had, in fact, been carried out in the years immediately following 1914. For this failure to heed the warnings of men like Nevill only the British Government of India can be blamed.

10

Some Conclusions

THE British never had to face a demand by a powerful Chinese Government for a major rectification of the Sino-Indian boundary, though most of the claims raised by the Chinese in the present dispute had already been stated before 1947. The Aksai Chin question had been touched on by the Kashgar *Taotai* in 1896. The Middle Sector quarrel, of which so far very little has been said here, had been endemic since at least the early nineteenth century. The Chinese had refused to accept the Simla Convention. Chinese maps since at least the 1930s had placed the Assam Himalaya within China and thus challenged the validity of the McMahon Line. We must now consider briefly what boundary rectification, if any, the Chinese could have legitimately expected from the British in 1947, given the state of British administration in the border regions at that time.

The McMahon Line

The Chinese refusal to accept the McMahon Line as a valid boundary resulted, some years before the outbreak of the Second World War, in Chinese claims to the Assam Himalaya right down to the pre-1914 'Outer Line'. The Chinese did not, of course, seriously maintain that all this large extent of territory, more than 30,000 square miles, had ever been Chinese, or even Tibetan. They used their claims as a symbol of their refusal to accept the fact that since 1912 Tibet had passed from Chinese control and had

become to all intents and purposes an independent state. The Anglo-Tibetan notes of 24–25 March 1914, which formalized the McMahon Line, implied that Tibet had acquired sufficient sovereignty to make treaties on her own behalf. To this no Chinese régime could have been expected to agree; and every Chinese Government since 1912 has clung tenaciously to its pretensions to Tibetan overlordship. The Chinese attitude to the McMahon Line, indeed, seems to have been little influenced by any Chinese views as to the suitability of that line as a boundary. In fact, in the 1960 Sino-Burmese boundary agreement China accepted a portion of the McMahon Line as the border the moment the alignment had been renegotiated. No doubt in any genuine boundary discussions with India the present Chinese Government would be willing to abide by a freshly negotiated boundary of more or less the McMahon type so long as such a boundary did not carry with it the implications of the March 1914 notes.

The McMahon Line is, on the whole, quite a fair and reasonable boundary between China and India along the Assam Himalaya. In a few places, however, it includes territory on the Indian side which could well have been left in Tibetan hands. The advance of the boundary in 1914 from Walong to Kahao on the Lohit is a case in point. The region of the upper Subansiri, where Tibetan pilgrims travelled on their twelve-yearly 'Long Pilgrimage', is another. Here, in 1947, the British had not yet established any administrative control: no British officer had at that date visited from the southern side the McMahon Line at its crossing of the Subansiri, though the region had been inspected by way of Tibet. The route of the 'Long Pilgrimage' south of the McMahon Line actually passed through tribal territory not under Tibetan administration, and the tribes had to be bribed heavily to prevent them massacring the Tibetan pilgrims. Yet

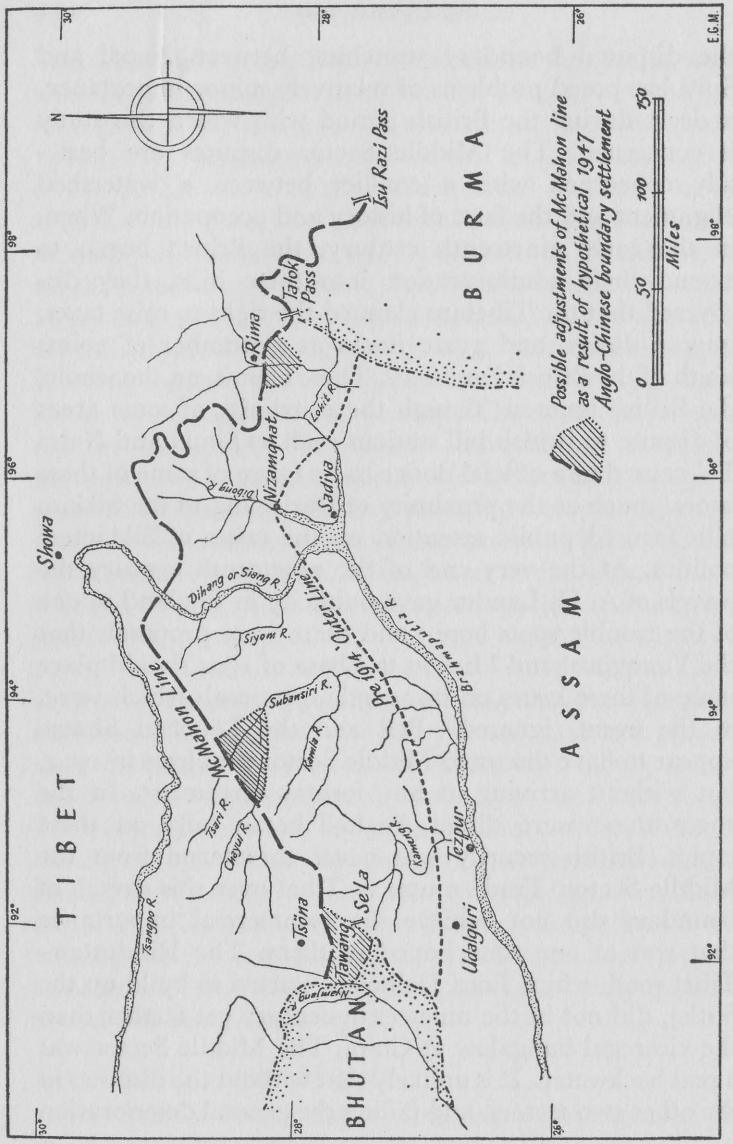
here Tibet was in far closer contact than was India, and the region was of some interest to the Tibetan authorities. As a gesture to the Lhasa Government, at any time since 1914 it could have been conceded to Tibet. Tawang north of the Se La was a district which could also have been returned to Tibet at any time before 1947 without sacrifice of Indian interests. It did not, it would seem, actually come under direct Indian administration until 1951, and at the end of British rule in India it was still controlled by Tibet, just as it had been before 1914. Tawang south of the Se La, however, had by 1947 definitely come under Indian control. The retention of this region, moreover, was clearly essential on strategic grounds so as to avoid a salient of Tibetan (and, by 1947, potentially Chinese) territory thrusting right to the edge of the Brahmaputra valley. If, however, all these possible modifications had been made, then India would have reduced its theoretical limits by perhaps less than a 1,000 square miles (see Map 16); and this would have represented the maximum adjustment of the McMahon Line that any Tibetan Government could have reasonably expected. The Chinese, who in 1910 and 1912 had placed their boundary markers on the Lohit at Walong, a few miles below the McMahon boundary, and not near Sadiya where ran the old 'Outer Line' border, showed clearly enough where they thought their territorial limits should be: and their claims then were far less than those implied by Chinese maps now. It seems likely that China would never have demanded more had it not been for the unpalatable (for China) implications of the treaty basis of the McMahon Line in 1914.

The Middle Sector dispute

The Middle Sector dispute has been rather ignored in this essay. Compared with the Eastern and Western Sectors,

the disputed boundary stretching between Nepal and Spiti has posed problems of relatively minor importance, at least during the British period with which this study is concerned. The Middle Sector disputes are basically concerned with a conflict between a watershed alignment and the facts of history and occupation. When, in the early nineteenth century, the British began to extend their administration into these hills, they discovered that the Tibetans claimed the right to raise taxes, impose duties, and graze flocks at a number of points south of the British boundary. These claims, on the whole, the British ignored; though the proximity of some areas of dispute to British hill stations such as Simla and Naini Tal caused non-official notice to be taken of some of these issues, much as the proximity of Darjeeling to the Sikkim hills focused public attention on the crises of Sikkimese politics. At the very end of the nineteenth century the travels of A. H. Landor gave publicity in England to one of the trouble spots here,[1] and there were proposals that the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa of 1904 should place some of these issues on its agenda, proposals which were, in the event, ignored.[2] Bell and the Lönchen Shatra appear to have discussed Middle Sector problems in 1914, but without arriving at any formal agreement. In the 1920s there were direct Anglo-Tibetan talks on these topics. British security was never threatened from the Middle Sector. Trade routes to Tibet over this stretch of boundary did not achieve the commercial importance that was at one time hoped of them. The Hindustan–Tibet road, which Lord Dalhousie started to build up the Sutlej, did not in the nineteenth century get farther than the viceregal bungalow at Chini. The Middle Sector was a real backwater. It is unlikely that without the disputes in the other two sectors, and failing the general deterioration

[1] Landor (1898). [2] Lamb (1960), p. 306.



Map 16. A Hypothetical Anglo-Chinese Boundary Settlement in the Assam Himalaya in 1947

of Sino-Indian relations, this region would have produced a crisis of any particular gravity. Even in 1962, when Chinese armies were advancing in Ladakh and Assam, the Middle Sector remained quiet.

The Western Sector dispute

If the Eastern Sector dispute involves an issue of principle important to the Chinese, the Western Sector dispute actually concerns territory which the Chinese control and intend to go on controlling. The question of the McMahon Line might well be solved by an agreement to call it something else: the question of Aksai Chin, it would seem, can only be solved after India has agreed to surrender all claim to the region through which runs the Sinkiang–Tibet motor road. In this respect the Western Sector is by far the most important of the three disputed boundary areas. What sort of boundary alignment might have been arrived at here in 1947, had Anglo-Tibetan or Anglo-Chinese discussions on the subject then taken place?

South of the Panggong lake the present difference between Chinese and Indian claim lines is not very great. A study of the Sino-Indian boundary talks of 1960–1 suggests rather that in respect to this section both sides were more or less agreed on the general alignment, but were interpreting the same evidence in rather different ways. The boundary shown on the Kashmir Atlas of 1868 is very nearly a precise compromise between the two claims, giving Demchok to Tibet and the western half of Spanggur lake to India. Given a measure of goodwill it seems likely that a line like this could be accepted by both sides. North of the Panggong lake the present Chinese and Indian claim lines diverge widely to enclose some 15,000 square miles of territory; and here the Macartney–MacDonald alignment of 1898–9 would be an obvious

compromise line. Indeed, had the Chinese been putting any pressure on Aksai Chin in the years between the two world wars, it seems very likely that the British Government would have acknowledged this particular boundary line. It resolved, after all, in 1927 upon a northern border very close to the Macartney–MacDonald alignment, and it may well be that the retention of the northern part of Aksai Chin on the British side was due to no more than a misunderstanding of the terms of the British note to China of 1899. It is certainly a fact that this note has been misquoted to imply the inclusion of all Aksai Chin within India by a surprisingly large number of authorities. Perhaps this misquotation can be traced back to British times.[3] The Macartney–MacDonald alignment divides in two what is now generally called Aksai Chin, leaving the Sinkiang–Tibet road on the Chinese side. It follows the watershed between the Indus and the Tarim basin, and thus embodies one of the few general principles upon which boundaries can be defined simply in these mountainous and unpopulated districts. It even seems to agree with the southern limit of penetration by nomads from Chinese Turkestan.

The Sino-Pakistani border

For what is now the boundary between Pakistan and China, from the Karakoram Pass to Afghanistan, the Indian Government in 1927 seems to have resolved to adopt a line in general agreement with that proposed in the British note to China of 1899. The 1899 line ran a little farther north at its western extremity than did the 1927 line: otherwise they appear to have been very similar. In

[3] Since 1958 this document has been misquoted by Mr Nehru, H. E. Richardson, J. S. Bains, P. K. Chakravarti, and many others. I cannot believe that this misquotation has been deliberate on the part of the Indian side: for one thing, such an act would have been ill advised; it was known that the Chinese possessed a copy of the original note.

early 1963 the Chinese agreed with Pakistan on this 1927 alignment, and even improved on it slightly in the region north of Shimshal.[4] There can hardly be said to have been anything like a Sino-Pakistani border dispute. It is perhaps unfortunate, however, that the 1927 line never found its way on to British maps, so that the boundary now agreed looks on paper as if it has involved the surrender by Pakistan to China of a great deal of territory. All that has in fact been surrendered has been the theoretical advanced boundary of the kind which Sir John Ardagh proposed in 1897. It is to just this kind of boundary that India is clinging when she insists on her right to the northern part of Aksai Chin and the upper reaches of the Karakash river.

The Sino-Indian border

A study of the Sino-Indian boundary, at least from the standpoint of its historical evolution up to 1947, suggests that the Chinese, either in their own right or as the masters of Tibet, have legitimate claims to a few small tracts of territory south of the McMahon Line and, perhaps (if there are such things as legitimate claims over desert country), to the northern part of Aksai Chin through which runs their road. All this amounts to about 7,000 square miles of territory out of a total Chinese claim of more than 45,000 square miles. For the remaining 38,000 or so square miles the Chinese case, on grounds of history, tradition, treaty, and administration is nowhere particularly good or worthy of the attention of a Great Power. In the Assam Himalaya, with the exception of the border tracts already noted, the Chinese claim can only be described as absurd; and there are reasons to suppose that the present Chinese Government regards it as no more than a bargaining device. India, however, has

[4] *The Times*, 4 Mar. 1963.

refused to concede that China has anywhere along the disputed border any case at all. This attitude is perhaps not hard to understand. It is easy to sympathize with India's reaction to Chinese pressure. Yet it may be regretted that, before the crisis of late 1962 was reached and, it may be, a point of no return was passed, India did not attempt to offer the few concessions which she could in all justice have made rather than have persisted in her declarations of absolute right. This might not have solved the problem of Sino-Indian relations; but in attempting it India could hardly have been accused of appeasement.

Appendix I

Lord Hardinge to the Vizier of Lhassa-Gartope &c, &c and the authorities in Thibet, 4 August 1846.[1]

Be it known to Your Excellency that by a treaty now concluded between the two high powers, the British Government and the Durbar of Lahore, His Highness Maharajah Dulleep Sing has ceded to the British Government in perpetual sovereignty the Hill Countries between the Rivers Beas and Indus including Cashmere and its dependencies and the Province of Hazarah, all of which countries were up to the present time in the possession of the Lahore Government.

Be it further known to Your Excellency that the British Government have formed a treaty with His Highness Maharajah Goolab Sing of Jummoo and for good and sufficient reason and out of friendly regard to His Highness have ceded to His Highness in perpetual sovereignty under the supremacy of the British Government all the Hill Country situated to the eastward of the River Indus and to the westward of the River

[1] I.O., *Encl. to Secret Letters from India*, vol. 106, no. 33. This document was sent to the Tibetan Governors (or Garpons) of Gartok by way of an official in the employ of the Indian hill state of Bashahar, and a copy was sent to Sir John Davies at Hong Kong to send on to Peking by way of the Canton Government. I have referred to this note in my *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, pp. 75–6, where I say that Davies handed it over to the Chinese Minister in Hong Kong. Of course, there was no such Chinese official at that time, and the reference should be to the Chinese Viceroy at Canton.

This note is one of the two formal British proposals to China in the nineteenth century on the question of the Sino-Kashmir border, the other being the note of 14 March 1899 which appears in Appendix II. Assuming that the Chinese Government in Peking still possesses an archive going back to the nineteenth century, then in it should contain these two documents.

By the *Vizier of Lhassa-Gartope* is to be understood either the Chinese Resident at Lhasa or the Tibetan authorities at Gartok (*Gartope*). At this date the British did not have a very clear idea as to the way in which the Chinese exercised influence in Tibet.

Ravee including Chumba and excluding Lahoul—these countries being portions of the territory ceded to the British Government by the Lahore Durbar. As it is now deemed expedient to settle definitely the boundaries to the eastward of the countries thus ceded to His Highness Maharajah Goolab Singh, in order that hereafter no questions or disputes may arise concerning their exact limits, I have now determined to depute two of my confidential officers, Mr. Vans Agnew and Captain Cunningham, in order that they in conjunction with the confidential agents of His Highness Maharajah Goolab Singh should lay down the boundary between the territories of the British Government and those of its dependants, and the territories of Maharajah Goolab Singh.

As it is understood that the territories belonging to the great Empire of China and which are under Your Excellency's Government adjoin those of the British Government and of the Maharajah Goolab Sing: and with a one regard to the friendly alliance now subsisting between the British Government and the Empire of China I now think it necessary to inform Your Excellency of the deputation of my officers and of the objects they have in view.

I have to express my hope that Your Excellency will see fitting to depute confidential agents to point out to my officers the exact limits of the Chinese frontier in order that no interference may thro' ignorance be exercised with the territories of your high and esteemed Government. As by the 4th Article of the treaty with the Government of Lahore the entire rights and interests of the Durbar in the territory now ceded to the Maharajah Goolab Sing were transferred to the British Government, I have deemed it expedient that certain portions of the Treaty between the Chinese authorities and those of Lahore should be cancelled as these were in their nature highly injurious to the interests of the British Government and its Dependants.[2] I have accordingly determined that the 2nd Article of the Treaty aforesaid, by which it was provided that the entire trade should pass thro' Ladakh, should be cancelled,

[2] The Treaty of 1842, Lahore confirmatory text.

and that the 3rd Article should be modified and run as follows:—

> Such persons as may in future proceed from China to Ladakh or to the British Territory or its dependencies or from Ladakh or the British Territory and its dependencies to China are not to be obstructed on the road.

It is not the desire of the British Government to intrude into the Chinese territory, or to ask for admittance except to such marts as are open to general traders of other countries, or to secure exclusive privileges for its subjects, but it desires to secure for them equal advantages with the subjects of other States and with this view it is expedient that British traders may be permitted to go and come by whatever road they please without molestation or hindrance.

As a proof of the enlightened policy of the British Government and its desire to advance the welfare of its subjects I may inform Your Excellency that no duties whatever are levied within the British territory on shawl wool or any other products of China which may be imported into such countries. An intimation of the wishes of the British Government with respect to the Treaty between the Chinese and Sikh Governments has been made to Maharajah Goolab Sing—and His Highness will doubtless readily acquiesce in the just demands and wishes of the British Government.

I hope you will find it in your power to exhibit friendly attention towards my officers and to assist them in bringing to a conclusion the duty they have to perform.

I have to inform Your Excellency that I have transmitted a copy of this letter to the High Officer of the British Government stationed at Hong Kong, who is entrusted with the duty of maintaining the friendly relations between the two High Governments in order that His Excellency may take measures to have its contents communicated to His Imperial Majesty.

Accept of the expression of my high estimation and regard for Your Excellency.

(*Sgd*) Hardinge.

Appendix II

Sir C. MacDonald to the Tsung-li Yamên[1]

Peking
14 March 1899

MM. les Ministres,

I have the honour, by the direction of Her Majesty's Government, to address Your Highness and Your Excellencies on the subject of the boundary between the Indian State of Cashmere and the new dominion of Chinese Turkestan.

In the year 1891 the Indian Government had occasion to repress by force of arms certain rebellious conduct on the part of the Ruler of the State of Kanjut,[2] a tributary of Cashmere. The Chinese Government then laid claim to the allegiance of Kanjut by virtue of a tribute of 1½ ounces of gold dust paid by its Ruler each year to the Governor of the new dominion, who gave in return some pieces of silk.

It appears that the boundaries of the State of Kanjut with China have never been clearly defined. The Kanjutis claim an extensive tract of land in the Taghdumbash Pamir, extending as far north as Tashkurgan, and they also claim the district known as Raskam to the south of Sarikol. The rights of Kanjut over part of the Taghdumbash Pamir were admitted by the Taotai of Kashgar in a letter to the Mir of Hunza, dated February 1896, and last year the question of the Raskam district was the subject of negotiations between Kanjut and the officials of the new dominion, in which the latter admitted that some Raskam land should be given to the Kanjutis.

It is now proposed by the Indian Government that for the

[1] The English text of this note may be seen in the Public Record Office, London, in H.O. Bax-Ironside, Despatch no. 81 of 1899, Peking, 7 April 1899, FO/17/1373.

[2] Kanjut is another name for Hunza.

sake of avoiding any dispute or uncertainty in the future, a clear understanding should be come to with the Chinese Government as to the frontier between the two States. To obtain this clear understanding, it is necessary that China should relinquish her shadowy claims to suzerainty over the State of Kanjut. The Indian Government, on the other hand, will, on behalf of Kanjut, relinquish her claims to most of the Taghdumbash and Raskam districts.

It will not be necessary to mark out the frontier. The natural frontier is the crest of a range of mighty mountains, a great part of which is quite inaccessible. It will be sufficient if the two Governments will enter into an agreement to recognise the frontier as laid down by its clearly marked geographical features. The line proposed by the Indian Government is briefly as follows: It may be seen by reference to the map of the Russo-Chinese frontier brought by the late Minister, Hung Chun, from St. Petersburg, and in possession of the Yamên.[3]

Commencing on the Little Pamir from the Peak at which the Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission of 1895 ended their work, it runs south-east, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi; thence proceeding in the same direction it joins at the Karchenai Pass the crest of the main ridge of the Mustagh range. It follows this to the south, passing by the

[3] Hung Tajen's map of 1893 has recently been produced in evidence by the Indian side. It shows, in the Aksai Chin region, a variant of the Johnson boundary alignment placing all of Aksai Chin within British India. This is not surprising, since the map in question was in fact traced from a Russian map. The Hung Tajen map was produced by the Chinese Minister in St Petersburg in 1893 as the basis for Sino-Russian boundary discussions relating to the Pamirs; and marked on it was what the Chinese thought the Pamirs boundary should be, far west of the line of the Sarikol range where that boundary had by 1895 become tacitly fixed. The question of the Sinkiang–Kashmir boundary did not arise at these discussions, and Hung Tajen's map offers no relevant evidence for that particular alignment. It was a map very similar to that of Hung Tajen to which the Kashgar Taotai took exception in 1896, as has been described above, p. 102. Hung Tajen's map provides an admirable illustration of the amount of background information required before a reliable assessment of the evidence of maps can be made. (See *Indian Officials' Report*, p. 305.)

Kunjerab Pass, and continuing southwards to the peak just north of the Shimshal Pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line turning south through the Darwaza post crosses the road from the Shimshal Pass at that point, and then ascends the nearest high spur, and regains the main crests which the boundary will again follow, passing the Mustagh, Gusherbrun, and Saltoro Passes by the Karakoram. From the Karakoram Pass the crests of the range run east for about half a degree (100 *li*), and then turn south to a little below the thirty fifth parallel of north latitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Gilga, and from there in a south-easterly direction follows the Lak Tsung Range until that meets the spur running south from the K'un-lun range, which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° east longitude.[4]

Your Highness and Your Excellencies will see by examining this line that a large tract of country to the north of the great dividing range shown on Hung Chun's map as outside the Chinese boundary will be recognised as Chinese territory.

I beg Your Highness and Your Excellencies to consider the matter, and to favour me with an early reply.

I avail, &c,

(*Sgd*) Claude M. MacDonald

[4] See Maps 6 and 8 where this alignment is shown.

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Note: The archives of the India Office and the British Foreign Office are not at present open to public inspection beyond the year 1912. I have not, therefore, been able to see the documents relating to the Simla Conference of 1913–14, which will begin to be available from 1964 onwards; and for this crucial period I have had to make do with the published sources supplemented by conversations with some of the people concerned with the making of British policy at that time.

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NOTE ON MAPS

Maps have played an important part in my examination of the disputed boundaries. I have consulted maps in the Map Rooms of Cambridge University Library, the India Office Library, and the Foreign Office Library, as well as those in the collections of the Royal Geographical Society. The recent Sino-Indian boundary discussions took place on the basis of maps at scales of between 1:4,000,000 and 1:5,000,000. Such scales are, in fact, far too small to enable the student to examine in any detail the complexities of boundaries in mountainous country. I have made considerable use of the Asia 1:1,000,000 series of maps, Sheets N.H.46, N.H.47, N.G.46, and N.G.47 for the Eastern Sector of the dispute, and Sheets N.J.44, N.J.45, N.I.44, and N.I.45 for the Western Sector. Boundary disputes, like battles, often seem to take place at the junctions of map sheets. These 1:1,000,000 maps are part of an international series, and at various times sheets covering the same area have been produced by different cartographical bodies for different purposes. Of the sheets which I have used, some have been issued by the Survey of India, others by the Geographical Section of the British General Staff, and yet others by the Corps of Engineers of the United States Army. Some have been revised in the light of recent surveys, while some cover large areas based on surveys of fifty or more years ago. Some are designed for use by pilots. Some show international boundaries and some, notably the recent British issues, do not. The boundaries in any case cannot be regarded as of any significance in international law. Apart from a good-scale modern map, the student of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute should have access to the two sheets of the map of the North East Frontier on which the McMahon Line was first drawn in 1914. These have been published by India, in *Atlas*, and by China in *Peking Review*, 30 November 1962, in both cases considerably reduced in scale. The original map was at a scale of 1:500,000.

PB 42-5

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The common border between India and China, which extends for more than 2,000 miles, has become in recent years the subject of intense dispute. The consequences of the resulting Sino-Indian conflict have been profound both for India's position as a non-aligned state and for the balance of power between the Communist world and the West throughout Asia. In this essay Dr. Lamb examines some of the factors which resulted in the evolution of a disputed boundary alignment in the Himalaya and Karakoram mountains. He traces the history of this boundary during the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, and describes the state of the boundary in 1947 when Great Britain transferred sovereignty to India and Pakistan. He considers not only those sections of border at present disputed between India and China, but also the section which has recently been settled by agreement between China and Pakistan. For his account of the history of the boundary Dr. Lamb makes extensive use of unpublished documentary sources. His aim has been to present an impartial account of where the boundary is and how it came to be there, an account which should provide a valuable background for those who endeavour to understand the reasons for the present unhappy state of Sino-Indian relations. Much of the information in this essay has not been published before.

Alastair Lamb was born in Manchuria in 1930. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, and is at present Reader in History in the University of Malaya. He has made a special study of the relations between India and Chinese Central Asia, publishing the first volume of his *Britain and Chinese Central Asia* in 1960. In recent years he has also carried out archaeological investigations of pre-European maritime trade between the Malay Peninsula and China and the Middle East.

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